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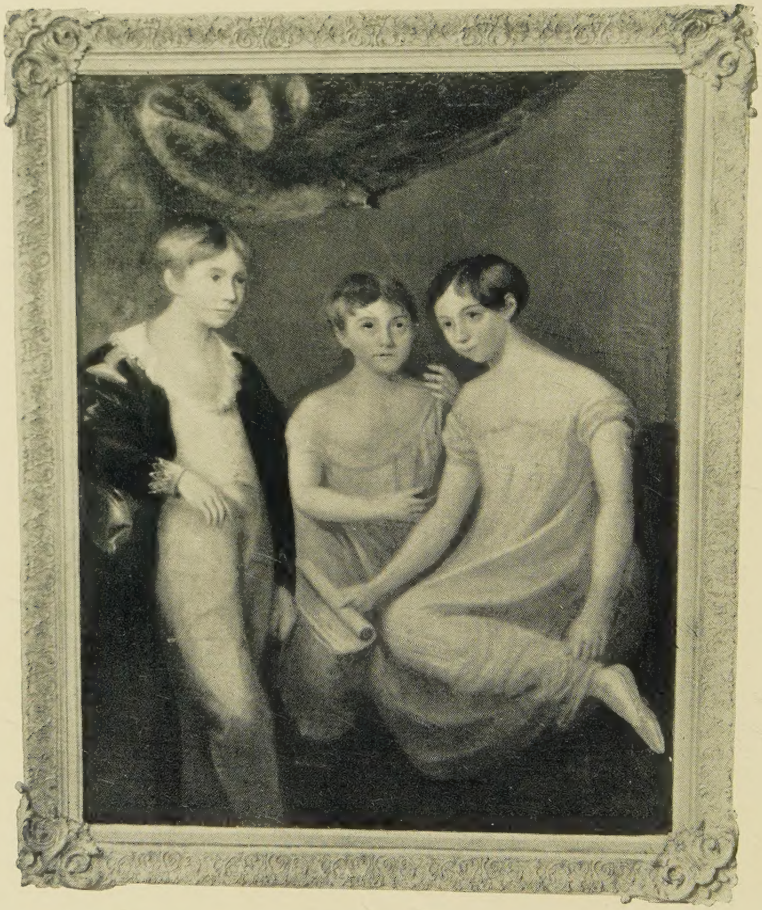

EDWARD, HENRIETTA AND ELIZABETH BARRETT BARRETT.

From a portrait in the possession of the Rev. A. S. Altham.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING:

LETTERS TO HER SISTER, 1846–1859

EDITED BY LEONARD HUXLEY, LL.D.

WITH PORTRAITS

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

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INTRODUCTION

THE two volumes of the Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning edited by Sir F. G. Kenyon in 1897 contain none that she wrote to her sisters Henrietta and Arabel Barrett. Doubtless they were held back by relatives as belonging too closely to the family circle. But with the lapse of seventy years the perspective has changed. Time has removed the personal hesitancies; the inner circle has passed into history, and a later generation can but welcome any fresh touches to the picture of Elizabeth's character, revealing yet more fully how she thought and felt, the perfection of her union with Robert Browning, the tender sympathy for childhood which found vent in her deep love and maternal pride in her little son.

To-day, by great good fortune, one portion of these unpublished letters has come to light. Henrietta lovingly preserved those which were written to her; in 1875, many years after her death, her husband reinsured their existence with no less care by copying them all into a set of quarto MS. books. His invaluable foreword and notes explain family history and allusions in a way possible only to one who still had personal knowledge of those concerned. These descended to his son, the Rev. Altham Surtees Altham, whose brother, General Sir Edward Altham, K.C.B., brought them to Sir John Murray, to ask his advice about publication, and the work was entrusted to the present editor.

The letters are one hundred and seven in number, and include a supplementary letter or postscript from Robert Browning. A certain amount of excision has clearly been necessary. There are, for instance, many nursery details of immediate interest to a young mother, and to her alone. There are passing references to persons and things that have no general interest, and can throw little light on Mrs. Browning's

outlook, as their history is lost beyond resuscitation. Still, while avoiding mere repetition of personal messages, it is well to preserve witness of how she never forgets old friends and old servants, her home and her home ties. Of Edward, indeed, her best-beloved brother, next in age to herself, she was never able to speak openly ; his sudden death in a sailing accident at Torquay was her heart's tragedy, seeming, in her sensitive imagination, to be almost of her own making, since it was to be her companion during convalescence that he had come to the seaside.

Of the rest, the nearest in heart and mind were her two sisters ; no letter seems complete without a heartfelt prayer for their well-being. Her seven remaining brothers, and " Stormie," the eldest of them most frequently, have affectionate mention, particularly after they had become reconciled to her marriage, for though they had been on her side before, they wounded her deeply by unexpected disapproval when she actually took a step so contrary to worldly prudence. For her father, too, from her childhood up so proud of her talent, so indulgent to her poetic aspirations, so affectionate to her filial dependence, she still has tender thought, and her letters crave from her sisters the news of him that his deliberate silence withheld. The old love refused to be quenched, though the masterful strength she admired in him had swollen to a strange and tyrannous egotism. His intense love of his family had crystallised into an *idée fixe*. He was to be the sole centre round which the complete family was to revolve. Incredible as it sounds, he had coldly warned Elizabeth when she was ill that if her brother took her abroad for the winter, in good hope, so the doctors averred, of recovering her health, they should neither of them return to his roof, and in a stormy scene he had already forced Henrietta to refuse her first suitor on pain of being utterly cast off. Thus the alternative was all too clear when Elizabeth came to the crisis of her love and life : either to submit to a caged existence and early death, or to grasp at ideal happiness and the chance at least of recovered life in the genial sun of Italy. Sentence of exile she expected, submitting to her father's strict if narrow conception of justice,

though she never expected that it could last irremediably. But the father was implacable ; he would not even read her letters begging forgiveness and reconciliation. When the Brownings with their little son revisited England in 1851 she wrote again and Robert also. In reply came " a very violent and unsparing letter " to Robert, and with it all the letters she had written to her father in those five years—" sent back unopened, the seals unbroken." He never saw her again ; he never set eyes on his little grandson.

Strange result of a love that had grown inwards. It was not precisely the slave-holder's instinct, for though the Barretts' great wealth was derived from the Jamaica sugar plantations, Mr. Barrett himself was all for ending slavery. Neither had he grown up among slaves, for he had been brought to England as a small child, and had never returned to Jamaica. His interests in the island and its prosperity were those of an absentee landlord. It was left for his eldest surviving son, " Stormie," to renew personal connexions with Jamaica, where he ultimately settled down.

Elizabeth's mother, " of whom," writes her son-in-law, Major Altham, " so little has been said, and from whom so much sweetness of disposition, so much gentleness, goodness, beauty permeated to her descendants," was Mary Graham-Clarke, daughter of John Graham-Clarke of Fenham Hall, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

" Beautiful in mind as in person, she was one whom to know, it was said, was to love." The story of her marriage, which he proceeds to tell, reads like a flight of romance.

" Edward Moulton-Barrett fixed his first, his earliest, his only affections, in this direction. His guardian, the first Lord Abinger, conceiving it to be a mere boyish passion that would pass away, would not, at first, yield consent. He had never seen the lady, and it was artfully arranged that he should meet her at a dinner-party, where it was contrived that he should escort to the dining-room the very fascinating and beautiful young creature who had so charmed his ward. On being told who she was, he exclaimed (so it has been handed down), ' I hold out no longer—she is far too good for him ! ' They

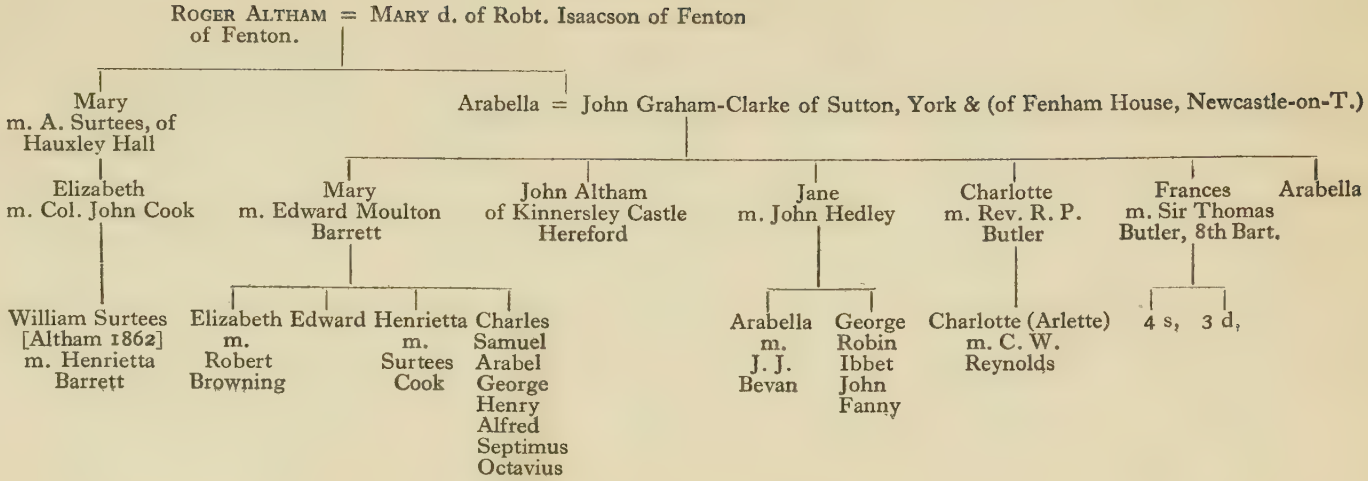
were married on the 20th of May, 1805, the bridegroom being under age."

She died in 1828, when Elizabeth was twenty-two and the younger children but small boys, so that she hardly appears in the family letters.

However, she brought two names into the family which recur constantly throughout the present series, Arabella and Altham. For her mother, Mrs. Graham-Clarke, was Arabella, daughter and co-heiress of Roger Altham, of Mark Hall, Latton, Essex, and the name descended to one of Mrs. Graham-Clarke's five daughters and three of her grandchildren.

Of these five Graham-Clarke daughters, Arabella was the youngest. She remained unmarried, and was commonly called Bell or some other diminutive by her niece E. B. B. Of the rest, one became Mrs. Moulton-Barrett; another Mrs. Hedley, while two married brothers, Sir Thomas Butler and the Rev. Richard Pierce Butler. In the next generation we have Arabella, E. B. B.'s sister, commonly called Arabel, and her cousins, Arabella Hedley (Mrs. J. J. Bevan) and Arabella Butler, daughter of Sir Thomas.

As to the name Altham, it first re-appears in Elizabeth's uncle, John Altham Graham-Clarke, of Kinnersley Castle, Herefordshire, which was not far from the Barretts' old home, Hope End. He and his sisters Mrs. Barrett, Mrs. Richard Butler, Aunt Jane (Hedley) and the unmarried Aunt Bell, were the children of old Roger Altham's elder daughter Arabella. From his other daughter, Mary, descended Elizabeth's second cousin Surtees Cook, who married Henrietta, the recipient of these letters. They named their eldest boy Altham, and "The Althams" came to be Elizabeth's pet name for her sister's children. Finally, in 1862, after his wife's death, Major Surtees Cook assumed the surname of Altham.


Roger Altham of Fenton. = Mary d. of Robt. Isaacson of Fenton
Mary m. A. Surtees, of Hauxley Hall
Arabella = John Graham-Clarke of Sutton, York & (of Fenham House, Newcastle-on-T.)
Elizabeth m. Col. John Cook
Mary m. Edward Moulton Barrett
John Altham of Kinnersley Castle Hereford
Jane m. John Hedley
Charlotte m. Rev. R. P. Butler
Frances m. Sir Thomas Butler, 8th Bart.
Arabella
William Surtees [Altham 1862] m. Henrietta Barrett
Elizabeth m. Robert Browning
Edward
Henrietta m. Surtees Cook
Charles Samuel Arabel George Henry Alfred Septimus Octavius
Arabella m. J. J. Bevan
George Robin Ibbet John Fanny
Charlotte (Arlette) m. C. W. Reynolds
4 s, 3 d,

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MEETING WITH MRS. JAMESON

I

Belated news—R. B. and the sisters' Christian names—His gaiety—An imagined peep-hole—Dreary Italian fiction—A secluded life—Undreamed-of happiness—The necklace and other souvenirs—Threatened visitors, American and English—Pisan climate—Armchair and sofa—Mourning—Flush barks à l'Italienne.

The first letter is written from Pisa, nearly a month after the Brownings had arrived there on their wedding journey, shepherded by their old friend Mrs. Jameson, the well-known writer on Italian art. For the great adventure of their secret marriage had an odd but fortunate sequel. Just before the marriage Elizabeth Barrett, " forced to be satisfied with the sofa and solitude," had refused Mrs. Jameson's invitation to come with her to Italy. Mrs. Jameson, accompanied by her niece Gerardine Bate (afterwards Mrs. Macpherson) had got as far as Paris when she was astonished to receive a note saying that the prisoner had broken free—was married and had reached Paris, very weary, on her way also to Italy. Anna Jameson, experienced traveller, proceeded to help Robert take care of her ; carried them off to her own *pension* and persuaded them to unite the two parties and travel together by easy stages as far as Pisa, where they all stayed another three weeks. The delightful journey brought them into close intimacy ; thereafter E. B. B.'s letters address her as " dearest friend " ; and she becomes " Monna Nina " and to Robert Browning " Aunt Nina," an Italian diminutive, presumably, of Anna.

From Pisa Mrs. Jameson and her niece went on to Florence, Siena, Rome, and back to Florence, where they all met again ; the Brownings, with Wilson, E. B. B.'s faithful maid, and Flush the spaniel presented to her by Miss Mitford, remained for six months at Pisa, staying at the Collegio Ferdinando.

To make clear various allusions : Arabel is the third of the Barrett sisters, to whom both Elizabeth and Henrietta were deeply attached. She was seven years younger than Elizabeth,

four years younger than Henrietta. Surtees is Surtees Cook (afterwards Altham), her second cousin and Henrietta's suitor. In this case Mr. Barrett fortified his general repugnance to his children's marrying by particular objection to Surtees' Tractarian views and slender means, the latter a practical objection which the Barrett brothers also took seriously, under " the illusion that nobody should marry on less than two thousand a year," though finally he had their warm good wish.

The Peytons were old friends who lived at Barton Court, Herefordshire, close to the Barretts' old home, Hope End.

Wilson, the lady's maid, eventually became as Italianate as any dream of her poet-mistress, once she had got over her Puritan shock at the nudes in the picture galleries ; and after being disappointed by a faithless Guardsman in the service of the Tuscan Grand Duke she made a very happy marriage with the Brownings' manservant, Ferdinando Romagnoli.

The name of the beloved John Kenyon will be recognised at once as that of the staunch old friend and kinsman of E. B. B., himself a writer and lover of literature, who played the part of " fairy godfather " to the two poets. He insisted at once on settling £100 a year upon them to put their married life on a practical footing. Like the rest of their friends, he was kept in the dark as to their marriage, lest a charge of connivance should break up his long friendship with Mr. Barrett. Later we hear of his efforts to mediate with Mr. Barrett ; of hopes of a visit from him in Italy ; of his kindness in lending them his London house and servants while he unfortunately was lying ill in the country, and finally of his leaving each of them a substantial legacy in his will.

Uncle Hedley had married Aunt Jane (Graham-Clarke) sister of Mrs. Barrett. We read of two sons, George and Robin, who served in the Crimean War, and several daughters, including Arabella (Mrs. Bevan), and Ibbet, and Fanny.

They lived abroad to a great extent : had a house at Tours and in Paris, and twenty thousand pounds in the Rouen railway. With such a stake in the country, they were as much alarmed at the revolution of 1848 as any of their compatriots living on the Continent, and for the time fled to Tunbridge Wells. Later, Uncle Hedley is seen reluctantly persuaded to leave Tours for Paris, and after some grumblings, getting reconciled to the change.

The Bevan family lived in Devonshire Place, close to the Barretts at 50, Wimpole Street. James Johnstone Bevan married Arabella Hedley in 1847.

Arlette is a pet name which, despite a superficial likeness in sound, has nothing to do with any Arabel or Arabella who figures in these letters. It is a diminutive for Charlotte, and our Arlette is Charlotte Mary Butler, daughter of Uncle Richard, and E. B. B.'s first cousin, who in the following year married Captain Charles W. Reynolds (see Letter 6).

Two old members of the household are mentioned in this first letter. Messages to them occur in nearly all the letters, though it is hardly necessary to print them. Minny, Mrs. Robinson, had been the housekeeper at Hope End, and remained in the family until she died, in old age, at Arabel Barrett's house, 7, Delamere Terrace.

Treppy or Trippy, was Mary Trepsack, " a dear old lady, who had been companion to their grandmother, Mrs. Moulton, in her widowhood. She died at a great age in 1856." Of Flush the spaniel, Miss Mitford's gift to E. B. B., whose many virtues and occasional misbehaviour are chronicled from time to time, the enduring memorial is E. B. B.'s own poem : " To Flush, My Dog."

The lost necklace was a very valuable string of pearls, and had belonged to their mother. Years afterwards, in 1855, the necklace turned up again. Letters 70 and 71 tell of its recovery and E. B. B.'s insistence that Henrietta should take it.

Pisa,
Nov. 24, 1846.

My own dearest Henrietta's letter which I should have received twenty days ago, no, not quite that, but certainly ten —received with Arabel's which will account to her for my swearing at her and you so very intemperately in my last notes. Now the swearing goes to the post and the post regulators. Only it was impossible to do anything but thank God and be glad when I held in my hands both your dear letters, my dearest kindest sisters, after a good deal of anxiety. In the future, remember to write over the address " *via France*," as this precaution secures the speed. I knew by the sound of Robert's step in the passage that he had letters for me from you, and held out two open palms to take them. Such ideas

I had had about you, though I put them away as fast as I could. . . . Oh, how happy, happy, happy, three times happy I am to hear of papa's being in spirits, and, in a word, to have people to dinner and to talk to them. I do thank God for sending me such good news. . . . On this account I think Surtees quite right in his opinion. Give him my kind regards and wishes that he may be as happy as I, which no mere worldly property could secure alone. . . . Robert loves you dearly and gratefully, and again and again says so to me ; and longs that it were possible to have you two alternately to stay with us for six months together. He is about to write to you under this envelope, and has come to consult me on the audacity of calling you Henrietta and Arabel in a letter. " And why not if they call you Robert ? " " Ah, but that is different —they are women you know, they might think it over bold in me." I will answer for it that he loves you, and we talk of you so much that almost he has learnt his lesson of everything about you, and all the reasons for love. Then I read to him things from your letters that he might catch the droppings of my happiness in them. This morning when we were at breakfast, sitting half into the fire and close together, and having our coffee and eggs and toasted rolls, he said suddenly, in the midst of our laughing and talking, " Now ! I do wish your sisters could see us through some peep hole of the world ! " " Yes," said I, " as long as they did not hear us through the peep hole ! "—for indeed the foolishness of this conversation would—on which he laughed and began, " abstract ideas," etc. *That* was for you to hear, you understand, to have the reputation of our wisdom. Certainly we are apt to talk nonsense with ever so many inflections and varieties, and sitting here *tête à tête*, are at times quite merry. He amuses me and makes me laugh, till I refuse to laugh any more—such spirits he has, and power of jesting and amusing—alternating with the serious feeling and thinking ; and never of a sort to incline him to leave this room for what is called " gaieties." Our gaieties are between the chestnuts and the fire—the pine-fire " from the Grand Duke's woods." When Mrs. Peyton fancied us about to be " very gay "—in the sense she meant,

nothing could be more different from the fact. We have been nowhere but into the churches, and have exchanged no word with a creature, except on two occasions with Professor Ferucci who certainly threatens to bring his wife to see me, but who is too much at the University to spend time on any person. We have permission to go to the university library, but have not done that even—being contented so far with subscribing 8*d*. a month to a circulating book-shop, and yawning over the dreary state of Italian fiction. Robert says sometimes, in one of those desperate fits of philanthropy to which he is subject, " Really Ba you are too severe ! " (yawning) " really this is not so very heav . . . y ! " (constant yawns !). We wish in time to associate with a few Italians, for the advantage of knowing the people, and speaking the language. Professor Ferucci and his wife speak French as by a point of honour : but for the present it is not possible to lead a more secluded life. I saw many more people in my room in Wimpole Street —and we both delight in the quietness, and give no sign of being tired of one another, which is the principal thing. For my part I am happier now than at first—(not so extraordinary perhaps), but it is strange for *him* to love me with *increase* and *this way*. It is not the common way of men. Wilson may well say that he does—Yet Wilson does not know of course. I assure you, I have far more extravagance and " voluntary humiliation " to put away from me than ever I had in the Wimpole Street days of adoration ; and now I begin to wonder naturally whether I may not be some sort of a real angel after all. It is not so bad a thing, be sure, for a woman to be loved by a man of imagination. He loves her through a lustrous atmosphere which not only keeps back the faults, but produces continual novelty, through its own changes. Always, he will have it, that our attachment was " predestinated from the beginning," and that no two persons could have one soul between them so much as we—which I tell you, but mind you do not tell it to—even dear Mr. Kenyon, to whom every confidence is due, except such a letter as this for instance. You must not show him my letters. In other respects you were entirely right, so right, in my opinion, that I had written to

the same effect to him. . . . His generous and quick apprehension of myself, I shall be grateful for to the end of my life, and in his letter the other day, he calls Robert " an incarnation of the good and the True," which is the truest truth of my husband, and draws from me a deeper gratitude still. It is nothing after that that he desired us, desired me in the case of any accidental *hitch* in the funds, to consider him as our banker, appealing to me as " his Ba and very dear cousin " to look for no nearer friend under any circumstances. Though we did not require this kindness, it proved what his spirit was towards us—yet was less in its degree (to my feelings) than his sympathy, so generously shown. I love Mr. Kenyon better than ever I did. I am bound to him for ever. . . . I am happier than ever I was in my life. . . . I never in my earliest dreams dreamed of meeting a nobler heart and soul, or a deeper affection—do remember, if you please, that I have been married nearly three months, though the first week (as I remind Robert) went for nothing !

(Remind Minny of what I said to her once about angels—*I have found my angel.*) I have a full satisfaction for earth, and a hope for over the grave—I mean the infinite hope, since for some finite ones there seems room still upon earth. We have our hope in that which is infinite. Therefore taking all in all, I am beyond comparison happier now than ever in life I was. Who would have prophesied that, some six months ago ? . . . The necklace I forgot to leave out, dearest Henrietta—you must wait till we can come to England with the keys, I fear. Only it is yours in the meantime, and you shall have it certainly. I don't know why I should have taken the diamonds which would have been more useful to you—and I would far rather have had Arabel's picture and the locket surrounded by the sapphires, both left to the last that I might have them nearer to me, and forgotten in the haste and agitation. I wonder I did not leave my senses behind me at the same time. In the locket among other most precious hair, is yours, Henrietta. Arabel's I wear constantly since it was in the ring which Robert had as a pattern for the wedding ring, and which he returned to me on our journey. I wear it day and night. Tell Arabel,

too, that I am quite ashamed when I think of the picture—I mean mine, which I meant to replace by the daguerreotype and never did—one day she shall have it. It is my debt to her. . . . Yesterday came a letter from one of my American pilgrims —a Mrs. ——, who went to Wimpole Street with peas in her shoes, and found the shrine deserted and heard of me afterwards, she said, by dining at Carlyle's. Her letter begins " Dear Elizabeth Barrett," and she gives me an account of her " *delicate state of health since the birth of a child nine years of age* "—which Robert declares must mean that the child was born at nine years of age, or else that there could be no peculiarity in the circumstance worth relating. She said further, however, that at this dinner at Carlyle's, where she had heard of our marriage, Carlyle had declared that " he had more hopes of Robert Browning than of any other writer in England," which pleased me of course, though she talked besides of *coming to Italy!* May we be kept from all Springs and Springes!—While I write all this—a card comes in—and Wilson asks if Mr. Browning would see the proprietor thereof. I ran into my bedroom, and Robert received Mr. ——, who calls himself papa's next door neighbour in Jamaica, and comes to enquire about me, and to offer his services and his wife's to both of us. Robert says he looks past sixty considerably, and that he talks of having lived here four years, and of having saved, by that means, a son in the last stage of consumption. I am vexed to have to exchange visits with these people —and of course it must be done—Robert says that he seemed to have heard all about my illness, and discoursed accordingly of the climate. How kind of dearest dear Treppy to speak so kindly of us. Tell her that we speak of *her*, and that Robert has a whole bundle of love ready for her—dear Treppy—I am so glad she was with you at Little Bookham. The cold would have put an end to me, as you describe it, for even here I have felt what we call the cold—which is a mere passing wind and an overpowering sun. We could not bear fires in the bedrooms (indeed there were no fire-places) and I have only one blanket, and leave open the door for air. The climate is exquisite. Robert has (I rebelled against the decree in vain)

insisted on having an armchair for me, so that with the sofa I am at my ease. Oh no, we did not put on mourning. Where was the use? never having seen Isabel, and knowing nobody here. . . . If Arabel sees Flush in her dreams, he must disturb them—so impudent he has grown and noisy. It's his way of talking Italian. Best love to all—all. Do, do write—and let me be ever your attached *Ba* and may God bless you constantly.

2

Exchange of letters—R. B.—Womanly sympathy—Pisan weather and health—Men and women—the Bevans—Illness and doctors—Plans for Venice—R. B.'s " infinite modesty "—Early service—Housekeeping and appetite—R. B.'s character and life *à deux*—A wise choice—One-sided visits.

Susan is Surtees Cook's sister, frequently mentioned. Later her marriage is referred to. Minny is the old housekeeper of the previous letter; Crow, a former lady's maid, now married.

Lady Bolingbroke seems to have been pulling wires to find Surtees Cook a post. Mr. Surtees, of Redworth, was a Herefordshire friend.

Collegio Ferdinando, Pisa,
Dec. 19, 1846.

My own dearest Henrietta has reproached me perhaps for not paying my debts to her. I am certain I would have written before now, if " the turns " had been properly considered. Still it is the same thing—and, for instance, I write at this moment to her, with Arabel's letter just read, and scarcely out of my hands. In which was a note from you to Robert though, and who should thank the writer of that, except myself? It pleased him, and it pleased me. You are too affectionate to me: but can't be to him—not that I mean you can love me too much—oh! but you understand! You can understand, and my darling Arabel can understand a great many things by the way, through what George calls your " sexual sympathies "—by which, if he mean that no one can be generous except a woman, he goes rather too far, however

upon a right road. . . . If the world talks Chinese, one must talk back Chinese to it, or not be understood. . . . After the divinest summer temperature, suddenly the air has taken to itself frost, and Pisa has had actual snow, the first time for five years ! ! say the inhabitants. For more than a week I have not stirred from these two rooms—sittingroom and bedroom —dressing and undressing by the fire here, as there is none where I sleep. I feel languid, and the old uneasiness in the throat, but am well otherwise, and have the hope and certainty that this is an exceptional state of things, and that a few hours may set us right at any time. The last time I was out I could not bear my shawl ; and now, even, the sun is so hot that women are seen walking out with *furs and parasols together*. The snow is on the Duomo, interposing between the yellow marble and blue sky ; and the mountains are powdered with snow—yet the sun burns, burns, Robert says, to a degree of making him feel sick when he walks in it. We heap up the pine wood—that is, he does—he is so afraid of my suffering : indeed I am afraid too : for if I were to be ill after all, I feel I should deserve to be stoned for having married. But I shall not be ill—the cold will go off in a day or two ; and even as it is, it is different from English cold. In the bedroom, for instance, where there is no fire, not a sign is there of frost on the window ; and the air is not sharp and metallic like that which cuts away the breath—it is a different air altogether. I sleep well, and all day sit half in and half out of the fire, so that I shall do well, I dare say. To give me dressing room, Robert goes into the cold, at morning and evening, like the kindest person in the world which he is—it makes me ashamed.

Poor dear ——! After all she means kindly and affectionately to us all : but the world is growing enlightened on certain subjects, and the exercise of the rights of men and women rather better understood. . . . It is sad to think of this new malady of the Tic. Always there is something the matter, notwithstanding their perpetual clientship to medical men. Tell Arabel that I have not left off my draughts—oh no !—I have not been " charmed " up to that point, though gradually I am diminishing it. Indeed my physician in ordinary will tell

her how I was not at all well soon after I came to Pisa, and frightened poor Robert out of his propriety. Patience and security go together, you see—and by the summer, we may do much. By the way, what does my dearest Arabel mean by making herself uneasy about summers, and such like things? I began directly by scolding Robert—" where was the use of your talking wildly in that way about Venice? " To which he answered very humbly, " He did not know—he was not aware of having done it—it must have been some allusion to some possibility—he was certain he said no more than that "—well, he oughtn't to have done it, I said—and in an hour after, taking up the letter, I perceived with shame and confusion of face, that it was *I* who had spoken of Venice, and he of coming to England " one day." So of course I had to apologize: for I remembered then what I did say of Venice; and I turned round, observing graciously—" whenever I blame you, I find myself in fault afterwards." To which he answered with the greatest quietness (of course, I *expected* him to say " my darling, when you find fault with yourself, you are most in fault of all," or something pretty of that kind), but he just answered—" It is a satisfaction, at any rate, that you should admit it." So I admired his infinite " modesty," which had quite taken me by surprise, I assured him; and then Wilson brought in the chesnuts, which were hard and bad enough to avenge me. But now, let my dear dearest Arabel be uneasy about anything except Venice. Why, Mrs. Jameson is going to Venice too; and she must be in Paris in the early summer, and in London in the autumn. Our plans are all mist just now—mere vapour in the wind. We think and talk, and then talk and think; and don't *you* think, both of you, that it is an inducement to go home directly . . . .

Tell me if you go to early service every morning, as usual; and if your walks are as long and agreeable as ever. Give my love to Susan and Surtees. We do not give up England, I assure you, only we keep to our plans of wandering up and down—it is necessary for my health and convenient; and we like, both of us, this way of living, free from domestic cares and the ordering and cooking of dinners. Will you take us in

some day, Henrietta, and " include the cooking and housekeeping " ? and see us " properly done for " ? Robert and I are just alike in every fancy about those kind of things—he turns away from beef and mutton, and loathes the idea of a Saturday hash ! A little chicken and plenty of cayenne, and above all things pudding, will satisfy us both when most we are satisfied ; and to order just what is wanted, from the " traiteur," apart from economical consideration of what " is in the house," and should be eaten, is our " ideal " in this way. My appetite is certainly improved. I finish one egg, for instance, in the morning. Then at dinner we have Chianti which is an excellent kind of claret ; and fancy me (and Wilson) drinking claret out of tumblers ! Ask Arabel if she wishes Robert to make me *drunk* (I write the broad word that she may have room to consider it) as well as—*replete with fish*, to try by reaction to move delicate physiology. He aspires to make me take more of this claret than he would take himself, pouring it into the glass when I am looking another way, and entreating me by ever so much invocation when I look and refuse ! and then I never being famous for resisting his invocations, am at the end of the dinner too giddy to see his face and am laid down at full length on the arm chair and told to go to sleep and profit by the whole. What is curious, is, that this process never gives me the headache, as two spoonfuls of your port used to do, and never makes me feverish. It is a light wine, you know, and not heating—the famous Chianti. A few days ago, our lady of the house sent me a gift of an enormous dish of oranges—for the " Signora "—great oranges just gathered from her own garden—two hanging on a stalk—and the green leaves glittering round them—twelve or thirteen great oranges, they were—and excellent oranges. We have one every day after dinner ; and the sight of the green crowding orange leaves is very pretty, and keeps us from thinking too much of the cold. We have taken these rooms to the 17th of April, and are sorry for it. Four months would have been better than six for Pisa ; and the Italian spring beginning in February, we might just as well have spent it in Florence for instance, as here. Not that we do not like Pisa—but there is little to

see in it, and the country, as far as walkers usually penetrate, is very monotonous; and when I drive Robert out for his hour's solitary exercise, he goes "along the flats" ever and ever in the same scenery, the forest is three miles off—the first *hem* of it—and the mountains five; and he does not touch either. Then he has an extravagant fancy (oh! even *I* call it unreasonable) that, except this walk for his health, he will go nowhere without me—"cannot enjoy it"—and thus he quite lives by my chair. What I cannot do he will not! Now, when we are in places where there will be more to see within reach, it will be better for him—though he declares that it is not dull by any means, and that he never was so happy in his life, for his own part.

As to faults, Henrietta, you and Arabel, may laugh as you please at my blindness. Of course he is quite capable of doing and thinking wrongly, and he will tell me things of himself, of which I saw at once "that was wrong, very wrong"—how much more wrongness must there be in God's eyes! But for defects of character, for deficiencies in the heart and moral being—for such faults as make themselves habitually felt in persons—and in most persons—I will say, and it is honestly speaking, I never perceived one sign of such things in him, and do not perceive them now more that the first day. Faults towards me he never committed, and I believe will never commit; and, by faults towards me, I simply mean an ungentle or impatient word, a cold look, an exception to the usual tone of tenderness. He says (said it just when I was observing the exact contrary), that it has been the greatest *advantage* to us to be shut up in this seclusion without any distractions—that we have *learnt one another* better by it, than we should have done if we had taken the usual course of married people who live so for three weeks or a month, and then proceed to other amusements. I had been calling it "rather a trial"—he said that it could only be so in cases of unreal and fanciful attachments. So I leave you this philosophy to make the best use of in your own experience; and do earnestly hope and trust, for both my beloved sisters, that they may be as happy, or even *nearly* as happy, as I am. What

is this which " Lord Teynham said " ? . . . . Nobody tells me the colour of the drawing-room carpet and paper and curtains, to help my imagination. . . . My love to my dear Minny, and particular entreaty that she will go to bed ; and mind you give my love to Crow. No wonder that she could not guess who was married ! How many people thought me mad, I dare say—but I was not mad most noble Festus !—not mad by any means—More and more I am persuaded of the wisdom of my choice and resolution. Now let me hear every detail of everything. Not a word of Lady Bolingbroke ? Tell me all. Mr. Surtees called two days ago when we were at dinner, and Robert studies his dinner hour to return the call. Mr. —— met him out walking to-day—" notwithstanding your very intelligible hints, I mean to call on Mrs. Browning." " She will be happy to see you," he replied, " but I tell you honestly *I never return any visits*." He declares he said so word for word—And now he says to me, " Ba, if *I* leave off writing, will *you ?* "—which I must reply to by a " yes, agreed " —shutting up my letter.

My beloved Henrietta's ever attached

BA.

3

Illness—Plans for Florence and Lucca—Mr. Kenyon and his intercession with her father—The money question—Last days in England—R. B.'s tenderness and goodness—Degrees of health—Housekeeping in Pisa : chicanery and cheating—A priest's visit—Hoped for visits from relations—Cannot get to England.

While there is nothing to identify the kind neighbour Mrs. Turner who helped in the marketing, Mr. Stratton was the clergyman of the Barretts' church in London, and Mr. Boyd is the blind scholar with whom E. B. B. used to read Greek and to whom she wrote " Samian Wine."

The " unpleasant positions " endured by Mr. Kenyon were due to his fruitless intercession with Mr. Barrett after the Browning marriage.

Pisa,
Tuesday and Wednesday, March 31, 1847.

Now I am going to give you the best account of myself possible, my ever dearest Henrietta. You shall have a second

letter, you, to make up for the last short one, with bad news too in it! This is to be full of good news, with not a shadow across it to spoil the effect. The Doctor was here yesterday, and gave leave to sit up, and even to stand up on my feet and walk a little—the reclining posture to be kept only as the general rule . . . I am to be quite able to go to Florence next Saturday fortnight according to the first arrangement. But our other plans of course are modified—for instance we are not to travel northward and pass our summer at Verona. He has advised repose for me at the Baths of Lucca: and after a month or six weeks at Florence (just as the heat shall decide) we shall settle for the season at the highest point of the mountain, so as to escape as much as may be from the " company " and the musquitoes, the two great evils to be guarded against. The scenery is said to be exquisite, and we mean to ride our donkeys and mules, (I am to have a donkey with a Spanish saddle,) and explore the mountain paths and clefts of the rocks, and darkness of the chesnut forest; and we have a plan besides of sitting at the window and blowing soap bubbles, which will tend to general edification, I think. The Doctor says that in that situation, there is a continual breeze and freshness, and we never shall feel the heat overpowering. Then, at the end of September, should all be well, there will be no hindrances to a slow northward journeying, a week at Bologna to visit Rossini and so on, till we arrive at Venice in time to *winter* there, keeping clear of the autumnal damps and malaria. We must see Mr. Kenyon, if possible—that dearest, best friend to us! When I talk of his being kind, the word seems to mock itself for being so miserably inadequate. A good deal lately while I have been lying here, I have thought of him and of the noble generous goodness which he has exercised towards me and mine, in a measure uncalled for, unsolicited, unexpected. Sympathy was all we asked him for, or thought of receiving, and he gave us head and heart and both warm hands, and thrust himself into most unpleasant positions for a man of his delicacy, rather than lose sight of an interest of mine by one moment's shrinking. Oh, I have been thinking it all over—

and do you know, Henrietta, I did not even *encourage* his kindness when it showed itself in this form. I hate so these money-questions, though relating to my own income. But dear, admirable Mr. Kenyon was stopped by nothing. I cannot tell you, you cannot be aware, of the full extent of his goodness and excellence : but I measure it at its height and depth, and am sensible to it with an increasing gratitude. Oh, that last day at Dear Treppy's, my dinner there—my thoughts. How the scene comes back to me again and again like something half dreamed, half lived. Whenever Robert appears in those unmentionable plaids, it comes back so verily ! Surtees' costume and Treppy's excommunication of the same. Do you remember. Pray don't think that I was in danger of dying on Sunday week—it is only my imagination which suggests cases. The Doctor assured Robert that there was no danger. Everybody wonders to see me recovering my strength now by handfuls, or heartfuls (a large measure) and God's mercy is wonderful in my own eyes. To-day I walked from the next room to this, all dressed and ringleted, and looking in the glass on the road, saw myself a little blanched, but otherwise rather improved than not ! ! Both yesterday and to-day, Robert and I had dinner together ; and really it was time for me to come back, for he had given up eating " tout de bon," and I expected him to turn into a shade. He was so dreadfully affected by my illness, as to be quite overset, overcome—only never too much so, to spend every moment he was allowed to spend, by my bedside—rubbing me, talking to me, reading to me—and all with such tenderness, such goodness. Wilson says " I never saw a *man* like Mr. Browning in my life " ; and I hear that the Doctor made a remark to the same effect. How am I to feel, do you suppose ? what I always do—that I am not worthy —only *that* feeling makes me more grateful than ever—I am bound to him indeed with all the cords of my heart. Wilson sleeping on the sofa in my room reminds me so, and still reminds me so, of my darling kindest Arabel, that my heart is full when I wake at nights and look that way—I thought of you and wished for you—I thought of poor dearest papa too. May God bless you all, as I love and think of you.

Wednesday—My appetite is good, and sleep sound—you have not the least cause for uneasiness, remember. Even Robert is in good spirits now, and we have gone back to our castle building. I was half afraid that I was to be kept " under the Doctor's eye " for the rest of my life, as Robert actually dropped something about our taking an apartment in the same house, at Lucca ! Oh, so delightful, *that* would be ! Now, it is not thought of, of course, and we are going to Florence to see the great sights, just as if one of us hadn't been frightened out of his wits. The Doctor goes to the Baths of Lucca every summer, and most Pisans do the same. This place is untenable in hot weather. . . . When I am once able to get out in the carriage (and I dare say I shall, by the beginning of next week at any rate) there will be no bounds to the strength I shall gain, and, as it is, we have the window open. The air seems to float its balmy softness *into* you. Oh, such air ! Observe, that if I am weak again (I think I hear some one saying—" There ! Ba's weak again, you see ") observe, it's quite a different thing from the prostration arising from disease ; and by the time you get this letter, Ba probably will be strong again—if God shall please—the strength returns quite fast, hour by hour. Now do write and let me hear every detail. Tell me of visitors and residents. We have made great discoveries here on the arts of housekeeping, and house-taking, and have had our eyes unsealed to the abominable impositions practised upon us. Cheating is systematized in Italy to a most frightful extent ; and nobody sees any harm in what everybody does. Foreigners are considered the lawful prey of the nation ; and the battues are as frequent as in an English " preserve." You will be amused to learn that Robert and I are held to be " millionaires " in our neighbourhood, through the sublime indifference with which we have suffered ourselves to be taken in on all sides ; and all the letters of apartments have been grumbling around the boastful contentment of our " padrone." The owner of the house opposite in defence of his own dignity was obliged to get up and swear that Mrs. Browning (mark Mrs. Browning) had offered *him* a fabulous price for his rooms if he would

break a prior engagement with Major L——'s wife—who thereupon being a woman of masculine understanding, (and superstructure besides) walked about Pisa, abusing Mrs. Browning in good set terms—for being unladylike, and I know not what. Robert was furious, and would write a note and present his compliments and deny the facts broadly. We did not even know that those rooms were to let, till our own were taken and occupied for a full month. It was just a lie of the lodging housekeeper, in order to prove that he might have taken us in, if he had pleased—precisely like his honorable friend. And of course I never did anything about taking houses, as you may suppose. They have cheated us in weights and measures, besides the prices of every single thing; and we have been paying twice as much as we should have paid. We hear now that, for two hundred and fifty pounds a year, we might and ought to live in excellent apartments, and keep our own carriage and two horses; and a man servant to boot: and we see how this might be done easily. At Florence too the cheapness is wonderful—only one must understand a little. Wilson opens her eyes at the system of iniquity worked out in such detail, minute by minute. It was that kind Mrs. Turner who set us right in these things, and took Wilson round with her to some shops and showed her how to do some small marketings—for as we are going away so soon we would not make a great revolution and fuss. Only we like the liberty of buying our own coffee, tea and sugar, in despite of the black looks of our hosts—and when we go elsewhere, we shall take our experience with us.

Yesterday a priest came in full canonicals to bless all the rooms of the house. Robert met him in the passage, and taking off his hat, desired him not to turn from his usual course on our account, as nobody's blessing could do any body any harm. But our hosts observed that it was better so, as the Signora was ill.

Do tell me how you get on while I throw you mine. . . . Ah, how good and perfect you have been to me, you—my own beloved sisters—heart and eyes overflow when I think of you! Tell my darling dear Arabel that when Robert said of her note

" something in it will make your heart leap," and I read that Mr. Stratton advised her to come and see me, I fell into a muse ! We should both hold out our arms, and four of them would be enough to hold her fast. Oh, what a dream ! But you must see, dearest Henrietta and Arabel, how foolish and imprudent it would be for us to go to England this summer. There is the expense, for one thing, of going and returning : for you would not like me to run the hazard of a winter in England. There would be no use, except for the glance at your beloved faces—and we have seen and done nothing yet in Italy of all we have to see and do. Thank you for the dear welcome letters—thank you both. The next will be from Arabel, and I shall answer it straight away. Tell her to thank Mr. Boyd for his kind one—Mr. Boyd and the crossings, the dear crossings, came when I was ill, and Robert read them to me—not that he reads my letters so in general, mind ; but that my head swam on that particular occasion and would not let me read properly. Does B[ell] talk of Florence for the winter ? or do the Hedleys ? Let me hear every thing. May it all go smooth for you, my dearest Henrietta. . . .

Your own attached BA.

4

Florence in April with Mrs. Jameson—Compulsory quiet—The journey from Lucca—Their first rooms in Florence—More civilised—Pisans are deceivers—Mrs. Jameson arrives to celebrate Shakespeare's birthday—Her appreciation of R. B.—Florentine housekeeping—Personal remembrances.

Mrs. Jameson, the Brownings' honeymoon guide from Paris to Pisa, was now returning from Rome, with her niece and future biographer, Gerardine Bate (Mrs. Robert Macpherson), a young girl of seventeen whom she had brought out to see Italy and study art. But Gerardine upset all her aunt's plans by falling in love and getting married. Her love story is told in Letter 10.

" Stormie " is E. B. B.'s brother Charles John who had recently gone to Jamaica. He was born at Hope End in one of those thunderstorms which occasionally pass over the Malvern Hills. Hence his pet name " Storm " or " Stormie."

Florence,
April, 1847.

I begin to write in the expectation of having a letter to answer before I have done mine ; but I must begin, my own dearest Henrietta, and thank you for what you wrote last to me, and tell you that we are safely established herein this beautiful Florence in an excellent apartment, and that I am gaining strength every day, and that Mrs. Jameson and G[erardine] are our guests, and that it will be a week before they leave us. We have taken a bed room for them in our house—(you know the *houses* in Italy would be palaces in England,) and they spend their whole time with us of course—only I don't go out with them, being wise, and resolved on keeping virtuously to the sofa until the weakness is tired out of me—poor me, who in the meanwhile am within a stone's throw of the Raphaels and the Michael Angelos and even see nothing at all. But the Doctor, in giving consent for me to travel, exacted a profession of intending to be very quiet indeed and for a little time after the arrival : and I find from experience that absolute rest does such infinite good, it is worth persisting in through every sort of temptation. And then Robert says " Don't be drawn into going out, Ba, I beseech you "—and it seems better to wait now in order to enjoy perfectly hereafter, and escape the risk of adding more painful anxiety to what he has already endured about me. He is so dreadfully nervous when I am in the least unwell, that not to be the least so acquires an undue sort of consequence in my eye, observe—Otherwise, and if I thought only of myself (and have I not to think of *you* besides of him ?) I should not mind being thrown back a week or two for the sake of a degree of delightful imprudence. As it is the jurisprudence carries it. The coupé we took in the diligence did very well, but was by no means equal to a coupé in a French diligence, and though I lay half the time, or more, across Robert's knees, the shaking made itself felt, and we regretted the private carriage which was nearly engaged when the Diligence people seized on us. Still it did very well, and the country with vine-festooned plains and breaks of valley and hill—ridges of mountain and

sweeps of river—was far more beautiful than I expected between Pisa and Florence. As to Florence I could see it only in our rapid passage to our hotel, across one of the bridges of our old dear yellow Arno; and when Robert had carried me into the Hotel Du Nord and laid me down on the sofa, I could only wait for coffee and dream of being in the city of the Medici. The next day he went out to hunt for apartments, and the day after we were settled in our present one . . . for which we pay about four pounds a month, having engaged it for two months.

. . . As soon as we had fixed ourselves I persuaded Robert to get a piano—and we have a good one, a grand one, a German one, including the hire of music, for about ten shillings a month. Then with a *trattoria* hard by, we have an agreement for dinner at three, at the rate of 2*s*. 8*d*. a day, covering the whole, observe—and they send us soup and three dishes, besides vegetables and pudding or tart. Every thing hot and well cooked, and there are three of us. Wine we have separately, and Robert pays three pence or four pence a bottle for what he drinks. My port, he never will touch, let me ask him ever so. Our payment for the apartment includes every thing, linen, plate, china, etc., and this time, every thing is in order. We have real cups instead of the famous mugs of Pisa, and a complement of spoons and knives and forks,—nay we have decanters and champagne glasses! we have come to the remote extreme of civilization. As Wilson says succinctly "*it is something like!*"

Moreover there is a spring sofa, the most delightful of possible sofas, and a spring chair, and I resume my habits of lolling with extraordinary pleasure. At Pisa, Robert hired a chair for me, at five shillings a month; so that before we had done with it we had paid the full price. And this, besides the additional *one pound six* a month for the rooms—one pound six more than we pay here, where everything is infinitely superior. Oh, we subscribe to the "Pisani Traditori," though we left poor Pisa without any rupture with our "padroni" of the Collegio. Deeply sorry they were to lose us, and hoped fondly to the last that I might have a relapse, so as not to be able to go.

"The Signora will be as ill as ever if she does not take care," said the chief matron to Wilson, when she saw me pre-

paring for a journey by going out in the carriage ; and if Wilson ever said that I was not so well, one of those affectionate friends looked at another with an expression of unmistakable and most flattering pleasure. So of course we were altogether grateful, both for the honesty and the kind sympathy, though not unconsolable perhaps for having got away. Robert declares that, if we had staid on there much longer, we should have fallen fixed into barbaric habits, and that on returning to civilized life we should with difficulty have extricated ourselves and been apt to cry out unawares, " Lady Londonderry, shall I give you a mug of coffee ? "—or " will you be good enough to thump with your fist on that door ? "—(because at Pisa, there was not a bell in our rooms, and Wilson was summoned by a knock—it was our only way.)

April 30. Well !—we are alone again. Dear Mrs. Jameson and Gerardine left us this morning, much to our regret—both of them most affectionate—and she (Mrs. J.) a high minded, true, generous woman. Very much I like, yes, and love her. They went at seven and would not let me get up to breakfast, all I could say—so I had to let them come into my room and give me a farewell-kiss, between sleep and wake on my part. If you should see her, if she should go to see you in London, (but she won't be in England yet for some time) mind you are kind to her, both of you, and make here feel that I have spoken gratefully of her. She deserves *that* of me—and of you. The amazing part of it all is though, that she has been charged on all sides with the arrangement of the marriage. You see, the coincidence of her being in Paris, and receiving us and travelling with us, looked wonderfully suspicious. She says people write to her who never can be persuaded, but that she managed the whole. " Oh, it is discreet of you to deny it. Of course you would deny it ! And yet you need not to *me*. You would never shake my conviction." Her answer is : " I tell you the truth. If I had had the least thing to do with it I should have considered it a very great honour. But I knew nothing, suspected nothing," to which people shake their heads incredulously over writing paper of various sizes. She (Mrs. J.) had fixed on last Saturday as the day of her arrival at our

door; but on Friday evening as Robert was playing, to me prostrate on the sofa, Shakespeare's favourite air (as discovered by poetical antiquaries) a voice said "upon my word here's domestic harmony!" and lo! Mrs. Jameson stood in the room! Both of us leapt up, one from the piano and one from the sofa, and we had our arms round her in a moment, and were listening to all the news from Rome. And it appeared that she had come one day sooner because the thought had struck her of Friday being *Shakespeare's birthday*. So she had brought a bottle of wine from Arezzo in order to do it the due honours in company with "two poets"—to compass which seemed worth an effort. So we had coffee and supper together for the travellers, and a very joyous evening on all sides; and she cried out as usual "Oh, that inexhaustible man!" meaning Robert,—to which I rejoined, "and think of the stream running just the same for these six months past, ever since we parted!" And she thought me looking very well considering everything: and before she went away I looked well without any manner of consideration and allowance. I could not go to the galleries with her, which was a great disappointment,—but it would have been foolish, just for the sake of temptation, to have risked a future prosperity. Now, at the end of the week's rest, I am quite another person; and the back is getting quite strong again. . . . Poor Wilson is quite in good spirits and likes Florence. A more honest true and affectionate heart than Wilson's cannot be found.

Well—but I was talking of Mrs. Jameson. Think of our doing hospitality for a week! Wasn't that rather magnificent of us! And the only thing that Robert can't do well, is *to carve*—and my accomplishments are not very much beyond him even there. Yet we managed—oh, we managed, and Mrs. Jameson was goodnatured as she always is. I am sure she looked on in utter astonishment, while Robert seized on me to place me on the sofa. She told me before she went away that every hour of her intercourse with him, from first to last, had raised him higher in her estimation and her affection. Dear Mrs. Jameson! In July or August she may be in England for the publication of her work, after which

her intention is to return to Italy—to Rome, for subsequent volumes. Gerardine is a "sweet girl"—just that—accomplished and affectionate, but rather childish for her age, which has its attraction also. Now that they are gone, we go back to our old habits—to the owl's nest in the hollow tree. Shall I tell you our dinner to-day—our dinner for two shillings and eight pence! Vermicelli soup—turkey—(not a whole turkey, but the third of one at least)—Fish (sturgeon)—(I should have mentioned the fish before, I think)—stewed beef—(done something like fricandeau), mashed potatoes—cheese cakes—We don't *order* dinner here, which is delightful. They send us what they like, and every thing cooked excellently and well served and hot—as superior as possible to Pisa. Wilson dines after us, and something is always left for supper. When Mrs. Jameson was here, we gave about four and six pence and were served excellently—green peas, asparagus—everything. Observe the difference of the possibilities of social life here and in England—No fuss, no need of arrangement or money. When we go to see Arabel in her cottage and you à gras (a thousand thanks to all inviters!) we shall make you spend more I fear, even if you give us mutton chops only and port. You will never give up the port, you unabstemious people, you! . . . By the way we expect the Hanfords day by day, as a kind letter from dear Mrs. Martin assured us of their being about to approach Florence, and that a note from me at Poste Restante would bring them to us. So I have written, and Robert will do what he can for them in the way of pictures and statues. Now do, both of you, write to me without fear of postage. If you knew what a comfort I draw from your letters, you would. And we shall soon hear from Stormie, surely. Tell me of every one. Oh, do! . . . My very best love to dearest Treppy, and tell her that I have a letter begun to her—but Robert hurries me about the post—bringing me your letter; darling things—I can't read it before I seal this—but in a few days you shall hear again, because we just have a notice of the arrival à Leghorn of the parcel and expect it every hour—so you shall hear directly. Mind, *I am well.*

Your own BA.

5

A parcel—Robert's taste in dress—Hot weather and regular hours—Twilight walks—The Bevan coincidence—Arlette's marriage: "to be as happy as I am"—Ubiquitous Father Prout—Powers the sculptor—Love against the tide—R. B. on marrying a widow—Flush ill—Home letters longed for—The Hanfords and the Kenyon settlement.

J. J. Bevan married E. B. B.'s cousin, Arabella Hedley. Father Prout was the pseudonym of F. S. Mahony, the ex-Jesuit and brilliant *littérateur*, one of the lights of *Frazer's Magazine*. In 1846 he went to Rome as correspondent for the *Daily News* while Dickens was editor, and afterwards settled in Paris.

Powers, the American sculptor, became a close friend of the Brownings, and has left some account of his meetings with them in his reminiscences. E. B. B. describes him ("Letters," i. 347) as having "eyes like a wild Indian's, so black and full of light. You would scarcely wonder if they clave the marble without the help of his hands."

The Hanfords were old friends of the Barretts. They were now travelling in Italy and were invited by the Brownings to call upon them at their lodgings in the Via Delle Belle Doane.

Florence,
May 16, 1847.

MY OWN DEAREST HENRIETTA,

I shall begin my letter and let it go on till it is ready to go by the post. Arabel's and your note which it chaperoned, reached and made me happy three days since, and I seem not able to bear the load of thoughts and feelings which accumulate hour by hour after such reading is done. So let me "draw off" gently—I thank her, I thank you—for I have had a regular letter too from yourself since I wrote to you, and I have to thank you besides for a pair of slippers, Cinderella's being nothing to them as to beauty, and half a gown, which I have on at this moment and which struck Robert backward with sudden admiration when he saw me sitting in it at the breakfast table. These thanks were sent to you before, but I fall into vain repetitions with a sublime unconsciousness in writing to you directly. Forgive them.—

You and Arabel deserve to be thanked to death, that is bored to death by thanks, for your dear foolishness, and extravagance of kindness, so you needn't complain much. As to the gown, it is prettier made up than in its original element. Wilson has made it beautifully, and the colour is Robert's favourite and mine—he likes all the dark colours (which is my fancy you remember, besides) and not those fainting-away blues and pinks and lilacs and greens. Talking of such things I have just been ordering a drawn white crape bonnet, like one which did not fit me but was pretty otherwise. He objects to the fancy straw (Tuscan) worn a good deal here ; and the plain Tuscan and Leghorn are said to be heavy in the heat.—Oh, so hot it is. The thermometer at seventy seven or eight. And this to begin with—in May—and after every possible precaution—Doors open crossways for the encouragement of thorough draughts—windows thrown also open (and French windows they all are opening like doors), green blinds shut carefully against every ray of sun. Yet there the thermometer stands unabashed. We give up our hope of being able to stay in Florence longer than the one additional month for which our apartment is taken. It will be impossible. Not that I have not felt it far more oppressively hot in London : but then it is only May, we consider, and if this is to be the beginning what will the end be ? Otherwise we have air. At six o'clock the muslin curtains seem to sigh themselves out—blowing to and fro. After our three o'clock dinner, Robert wheels a great chair into his dressing room, which just then has the deepest shadow in it, and makes me sit in the chair, and pours eau de cologne into my hands and on my forehead, and fans me till my eyes shut of themselves, for that is the hour of the *siesta*. Scarcely a day passes that I have not a regularly sound sleep after dinner. And understand, if you please, that since the heat set in we have reformed our hours, and get up in time to breakfast at half past eight or nine. Isn't it wonderful ? I won't tell you what an excess of radical reform, for really I should be a little ashamed. Then we sit up, now, sometimes, almost to half past ten : it is enough altogether to justify a siesta of considerable length, I think.

Robert doesn't go to sleep though—he leaves the sleep and the port wine to me.

But we both make plans how and where to go on the 22d of June when we must leave Florence, for a cool place. I say sometimes, " Oh, I wish we were in the Tyrol,"—to which the reply always is, " Well, dear, you shall go if you like it." Only we ought to consider the distance and expense and everything disagreeable on the other side. If we could spend the winter in Venice indeed! but you won't let us. Robert declares that you have " half *bullied* him out of it! " There's a thing to do! We mean to appeal however to somebody who will take a different view from yours and Mrs. Ricardo's and Mrs. English's, and swear perhaps that the sun shines on the Lagunes all night long without winking. Naples is an immense way off, and if we travel south it will be to Rome rather. The Baths of Lucca we won't hear of, and Pisa, have had enough of! " perplexed in the extreme " we are. Meanwhile I am getting strong, and have had two real walks, to my surprise. The first was impromptu—nobody thought of my walking out. Robert came in at six yesterday and found me sighing up against the green blinds for the possibility of a breath of air.

" Now, Ba, do you want to be cool? "

" Yes, very particularly."

" Then take my arm and come down stairs: there's quite a bath of cool air at the bottom of the house."

" Oh—and for you to carry me up again! No, no, it isn't worth while."

" But it *is* worth while, and I shall like to carry you—Now come, dear! take courage and come."

So he drew me along while I kept on grumbling about its being nonsense—but found to my pleasant surprise that I was infinitely stronger in getting down stairs, which together with the coolness, excited me into an adventurous humour.

" How delightful! Shall we walk along the street a little? Need I care about my bonnet? "

Just then Wilson came—on her return from walking—so we sent for bonnet and gloves by her, and in a minute were on our way to Piazza Santa Maria Novella, leaving our " street of

pretty women " for what Robert calls " Trot the jackass Street " (Trotto del asino) and enjoying it. Oh, I did enjoy it so much, the liberty of it, and the sweet fresh air which blew gently along the ground ; and as for him he said he should be too happy if always I could walk out with him in that way. Last night we were out again and got as far as the Baptistery where we sat down in the half dark and talked of Dante. I seem to have grown strong quite suddenly at last. You see it was bad for me to walk when I was weak, so that I did not try continually—and indeed the effort was quite painful. Now Richard is himself again, and needn't call for " a horse," seeing that he has feet of his own for action. We have had no carriage you will be surprised to hear, and have entered no gallery yet. The truth is, just as we were about to make our compact, it appeared that there were some previous engagements unconcluded, and were desired to wait a week. Then I said—" it may be better for us to wait perhaps—I shall be stronger "—it seemed better to wait until now when we are on the point of making our own terms. In the meanwhile every glimpse I catch of Florence makes me more eager to see all. Oh, this cathedral ! so grand it is, with its pile of tesselated Domes—the massiveness glorified with various marbles—the porphyry crossed with the dim green serpentine—the white and black heightening and deepening one another. Think of a mountainous marble Dome, veined with inlaid marbles—marble running through marble : like a mountain for size, like a mosaic for curious art—rivers of colour inter-flowing, but all dimly. But you will tire of descriptions of travellers, and I shall keep mine for the printing press and yawning readers—" my great work " as Arabel says encouragingly.

Now I am going to tell you things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme. I went a week ago into Wilson's room and stood by the table in my lazy careless way, turning over the leaves of an old book which lay there.

" Why, Wilson ! you have another Italian grammar." " Yes, I couldn't understand a word of the other, and the man of the house lent me this."

I turned to the title page—written in a large distinct hand—

James Johnstone Bevan, Milano ! ! Wilson thought me mad, I cried out so loudly, and rushed so vehemently out of the room to show it to Robert in the drawing room. And upon enquiry, the whole wonder of the coincidence developed itself. The book was Mr. Bevan's book, the landlord was Mr. Bevan's landlord ; and in a house of the said landlord (not this house but another) had Mr. Bevan and two of his friends lived for a whole winter. Moreover, this landlord had travelled with Mr. Bevan and his friends as *courier*, from Florence to Rome and Naples, (because they did not speak much Italian, he said,) and from Naples to London, because Mr. Bevan had been a good deal affected and shaken by the death of his friend at Naples. Two years ago, therefore, this landlord was staying in Devonshire Place with Mr. Bevan's family. Of himself he speaks in the highest possible terms, and heard with deep interest of his having married the " fairest of the fair " of Paris, which Robert instructed him in duly. Isn't this curious as a coincidence ? And " a most amiable, excellent young man," Arabella's husband was called—(such *issimos* I assure you !) " with a leaning to the Santissima Roman Catholic religion, and a great deal of talent," Tell me if Arabella is in good spirits and well. Will she take a house of her own in October ? . . . . Ah, " *to be as happy as I am* " may indeed be wished by the kindest to the dearest when wished to be the happiest—so I wish it for you, my dearest Henrietta, and I wish it for my dearest Arabel. *Half as happy* as I would be *very very happy*, do you understand ? *Quite as happy* would be *frightfully* happy—*heureuse à faire fremir*—considering life and the conditions of life to human beings.

Now I am going to write some more gossip—I dare say Arabel remembers my talking of the famous " Father Prout " and how Robert told me about a year ago that always he was meeting that Lion in strange out of the way places roaring wildly—Father Prout had even seen Robert without salutation, the reverend father had said, in various parts of Europe—and certainly Robert had seen him whenever the sight was least expected—Well—while we travelled across France, my fellow-traveller laughed a little as he told me that in crossing Poland

Street with our passport, just at that crisis, he met—Father Prout—" oh, of course, he met him just then "—It was a moment worthy of being so signalized! Robert told me this, and I said, " Curious," and the conversation changed. On our landing at Leghorn, at nine o'clock in the morning, our boat which was rowed from the steamer to the shore, passed close to a bare jutting piece of rock on which stood a man wrapt in a cloak, he also having just landed from an English vessel bound from Southampton—*Father Prout!!* Wasn't it an extraordinary " dramatic effect? " Robert had no idea of his meaning to come to Italy, nor had he of Robert's coming. Robert cried out, " Good Heavens, there he is again!—there's Father Prout! " We went to the inn and breakfasted, and after breakfast the reverend Lion came into the room, and I had the honour of introduction—not of examination though, for, as he told Mrs. Jameson afterwards, when he met her in Rome, he couldn't see my face through my black veil. Nor could I much better see him. I kept on the other side of the room, feeling both shy and tired. And now I have told my story. . . .

May 19. While we sate at tea yesterday evening in walked Mr. Powers the sculptor! (he of the Greek slave and listening boy,) and had coffee with us and staid more than an hour. Like most men of true genius, he is as simple as a child, quiet and gentle, calling himself " a beginner in art " which is the best way of making a great end. I took one of my fancies to the man, and might well do so as he was very kind to me and begged me to go to see his studio. Robert and he had a great deal of talk, and I did myself the honour of pouring out his coffee; and as when he went away he said it had been an evening both of pleasure and profit to him, I, of course understood that he referred to my coffee with the due appreciation.

" E—— M——'s " engagement " surprised me "—no. *Did* it surprise you? I rather believe now that I wasn't surprised. It was so certain to me that she would marry one day, only Mr. —— having been rejected. Well, but he *loved her*. A man who loved her all those years with all that constancy

against all those obstacles, is worthy of being loved. A proved tried love is always worthy. And then it always, (besides what it is in itself,) involves some strength of nature, some nobleness and excellence. I *like* a man who can love against the tide. When you see what men are on all sides—why, just see what they are !—I dare say she will be very happy. If Mr. —— is kind and tender to her, she will love him and be happy—now see if she will not—with that sweet frank face of hers. A single life did not suit her,—could not—never could. He will love the child for her sake. Robert exclaimed at the idea of marrying a widow—it's what he " never could have done." And I laugh and shake my head, because he's not a man to calculate the thousand, if he loved any one, the last unit even. If a woman whom he loved in that last degree, had had six husbands and killed them all, he would put his head under her feet and think it much to his advantage. No human being ever comprehended human love so divinely, which *I* say who know what he is.

Poor dear Flush has been very ill, and I was quite unhappy for two days, and Robert declared that I gave up loving him and thought of nothing but Flush. It began with what we supposed to be spasms,—he had fits of screaming. And then he crept under the sofa and beds, and would not touch water ; and if drawn out kept in one place for half an hour together, staring wildly as if he knew nobody. Robert made me promise not to pat him, and we all thought of hydrophobia—the heat you see had been so intense. At last Robert went out twice in one day, and brought home each time, and administered, a copious dose of castor oil, and poor Flush had a rope tied round his neck and a mat was provided in the kitchen. This in order to take all due precaution. When the oil was administered I ran away and shut myself in the farthest room (was not that like my wisdom ?) but Flush did not even struggle, they say—he knew it was something done to relieve him.—Poor little Flush ! The next morning he was much better, and expressed it by moaning piteously directly he saw me. To Robert and Wilson he simply wagged his tail, but he looked up in my face and moaned—moaned—as if to say " Do see

how ill I am! So very ill!" I said "Poor Flush!" and then he moaned again—put up his head and moaned. "Will you have a lump of sugar, Flush?" A decided affirmative with the tail—so I called for sugar and he moved himself on the mat to seize on it. Very glad I was to see him do that! and Wilson held the water to him and he drank it. An hour afterwards he was convalescent and is now quite well and insolent as ever. The castor oil did the good, we think. He calls me "Miss Barrett" still, and has all his old ways, and behaves better than at Pisa.

Do write to me—Dear dearest Henrietta and Arabel. How I thank you for your letters, both of you! I envy Robert sometimes for hearing oftener from home than I do!—and then he envies *me* for having such long long letters, full of details. There can't be too many *little* things—or "too much gossip," tell Arabel. Ah, if you *knew* the worth of those least little things at a distance! Because *I* know it, I tell you what pudding we have for dinner sometimes. Don't I, now? Tell me everything. Always mention dearest papa. I dream of him and pray for him. Do *you* be in good spirits my best and own Henrietta, and take courage and hope for all things. Make Arabel go out for my sake. Kindest love to dear Trippy, and all at home. How I love them all!—Interrupted!

It is May 21st—The Hanfords have been here—just one day—and I like them both much. They went with us to the *gallery*, and then dined with us—Robert would give them champagne! I am giddy still more with the Raffaels though. No room for a word. Love me always as your most affectionate

BA.

The Hanfords witnessed the signature of the great "*settlement*," and take it to England—to Mr. Kenyon. Neither Robert nor I read it. We only signed. It was much to my particular satisfaction to see, by a glance, that provision was made for a countless progeny! and all "future husbands!!'

6

Broken correspondence and an uncounting spirit—The only date that can be remembered—Arlette's marriage—Carlyle on the Brownings' marriage — Flush and the heat—The Vallombrosa project; possible difficulties—Miss Mitford—Bonnets, caps, and gloves—Heat and writing-paper—Italian women's hair—Galileo's villa and tourists—Powers' sculpture—Pictures in Wimpole Street—Home news and exiles—An American visitor —English maid and Italian picture gallery.

The memorable date which R. B. could not forget and E. B. B. with her poor head for figures could not remember, was the 12th. On September 12, 1846, they were married at St. Marylebone Church, and from that day, though they did not actually set out for another week, their reckoning began the fifteen years of singularly perfect union which were to be theirs. The next letter, in reply to some chaff, confesses how they " kept the day " not only on the 12th of each month, but at first on the recurring day of the week !

Arlette, as previously noted, was a cousin, her mother (Mrs. Richard Butler) and E. B. B.'s mother being sisters. Carlyle's appreciation of Robert Browning and his wife may be set off against Wordsworth's jest: " So Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett have gone off together ! Well, I hope they may understand each other—nobody else could ! "

The Vallombrosa expedition was duly undertaken, and achieved the final ignominy which Mrs. Browning feared. They were turned out after five days by " that little holy abbot with the red face "—" jealous of his sanctity and the approach of women." A full account of the " adventures of Vallombrosa " is given in " Letters of E. B. B.," vol. i., pp. 332-343. They are not told in the present series, but must have been described in a letter to the other sister Arabel, as they are mentioned again in Letter 9. Minny is the old Hope End housekeeper.

George is E. B. B.'s brother, a barrister on the Oxford Circuit.

To write of coming " down " the Rhine towards Italy, here and in Letter 7, is just the illusion of the map, which presents the South at the bottom of the sheet.

Florence,
July 9, 1847.

MY EVER DEAREST AND SOMETIMES MOST ILL USED HENRIETTA,

Can it be possible that Robert is right and I so very very wrong! I can't delay five minutes longer from throwing myself at your feet and confessing myself—whatever you may be pleased (being displeased) to call me—So wrong and ungrateful of me! But I seemed to feel confident of writing in the right and just alternation, and I could scarcely listen patiently to Robert when he spoke out and rebuked me for my injustice. The *third* time was the birthday—necessity—it was the *previous* time which I sinned in. But you forgive me—I did not mean to be so unkind. I seized on this paper directly on receiving your letter to express this remorse; and then Robert seized on *me*, and declared that it was dinner time and that I should sit by him on the sofa instead of writing at all. Observe how I correct my own injustices—I wouldn't be held tight—I wouldn't be persuaded and talked to—and I offended him and was called " the unkindest creature in the world " rather than abstain from washing my hands of remorse, for half an hour. So do *you* forgive me Henrietta, and understand how the fault arose from my uncounting spirit, of which you know something already. I never could count quite to ten, I think, without making a mistake. I forget days of the month, and the year of the century even, and if, as Arabel swears, I count right and right often the month of my being married, it is simply because Robert keeps the feast day of that event so very rigorously that there's no escape for my stupidity.

Talking of marriages, what an amusing chronicle you have sent me of Arlette's! I was very much amused indeed, and thank you for the whole. If we go to Rome this winter we shall meet them. What a calm marriage on all sides! . . . I do hope she may be very happy. Perhaps it was in *my* sleep rather than *yours*, that you seemed to tell me of Susan's marriage: but it did run in my head.

The poets are draining off into marriage very gradually, I think. By the way, I ought certainly to tell you of a delightful letter which Carlyle sent to Robert the other day, which

when I had read I kissed for gladness and gratitude, it gave me so much of both. He says that not for years had any marriage, occurring in his circle, given him an equal pleasure to our marriage. Here are his words as he goes on :—

" *You*, I had known and judged of : *her* too, conclusively enough, if less directly ; and certainly if ever there was a union indicated by the finger of Heaven itself, and sanctioned and prescribed by the Eternal Laws under which poor transitory sons of Adam live, it seemed to me, from all I could hear and know of it, to be this ! Courage, therefore ; follow piously the Heavenly omen, and fear not. He that can follow there, he, in the loneliest desert, in the densest jostle and whirlpool of London fog will find his haven. Perpetually serene weather is not to be looked for by anybody ; least of all by the like of you two—in whom precisely because more is given, more also in the same proportion is required : but unless I altogether mistake, there is a life-partnership which, in all kinds of weather, has in it a capacity of being blessed to the parties. May it indeed prove so. May the weather on the whole be moderate ; and if joy be ever absent for a season, may nobleness never ! That is the best I can wish. The sun cannot shine always ; but the places of the *stars*, these ought to be known always and these can."

Isn't that full, full of kindness ? We had had kind messages from him before, but it is the first letter—and I have copied more than I could becomingly perhaps. If so, you will make allowances, knowing my reverence for Carlyle, and the natural pleasure which words like these from him must overflow me with. Overflow me with ! What a delightful metaphor in the actual weather, when we are being burnt up, suffocated, exterminated—here's the thermometer at eighty again, and Flush turning his head away from warm milk, and his tail from soft cushions. Tell dear Minny that he would indeed be glad of his old place in her room, I will answer for him. Now he goes creeping under the sofas—having the delusion that every sort of darkness must be coolest—whereas the sofa-drapery scarcely helps him much, poor Flushie. I wish we *were* " overflowed " ; he and all of us ! I should like a little

Arno just now, in a ripple or a rush ! The heat is intense, and the worst is that having taken and paid for our apartment up to the twenty second, it seems a reckless extravagance to leave it on the eighth. Because it was cooler we thought we might engage for the month without danger ; and here, we are, caught in a suntrap ! If it were not for the saving little wind which gets up lazily towards evening, we should be done for, put an end to. Robert in the meanwhile is perpetually tempting me with :—

" Now Ba, if you would like to go away, we will go to-morrow."

" Now, my love, if you feel in the least overcome with the heat, we won't mind the money."

" Now, make up your mind and let us go."

And I, in an agony of prudential considerations, gasp for breath and an opinion. At last we have resolved to *bear it as long as we can*, and then go. A cloud is seen afar by the readers of almanacks ! We have strong faith in an Italian almanack, and it prophesies for Monday, *rain* which " mitiferà l' eccessivo caldo." If rain shouldn't come on Monday, we shall go, that's certain. At any rate we shall be gone in ten days, and to Vallombrosa after all—yes, to Vallombrosa ! We have a permission at last—we have a letter to the Superior of the Monastery, recommending us for various rare and valuable qualities, and requesting him to let us stay—so that point is gained in the face of a hundred fears. I was quite in a pet about it at one time. Robert said :—

" Never mind them, dear ! Don't mind ! Choose some other place—take out the map and choose for yourself, and we will go there without anybody's leave."

" But I want to go to the Vallombrosa. I don't want to go anywhere else."

I went on crying for my moon, like a spoilt child in a pet. Nothing but my moon did for me. The prettiest morning-star in the world, what was it compared to my moon ? So now we have it, and perhaps, as I was saying this morning at breakfast, it will disappoint us in the having, by turning out something different or inferior to our imagination. But the

scenery must be sublime—there are forty miles through the mountains of wild, roadless, rock and forest, the monasteries of Laverna and Camaldoli being further on, and all belonging to the same Rule and order. Vallombrosan monks are of noble families, the aristocracy of Italy. One thing I am half prepared for. They will take Robert into the monastery, and leave Wilson and me on the outside with other unclean beasts. We shall not be let dine together, even, I dare say! Perhaps we may have coffee sometimes, or walk out—but otherwise there will be a divorce. Oh, I expect it, I assure you. So, as I tell him, it would be wise if we began to accustom one another a little to living separated for half an hour now and then.

Henrietta, you frighten us by what you say of Mr. Kenyon. He is going to Vienna to see his mother in any case. . . . Do, if you see him, tell him how anxious we are; and tell him from me that we shall be at Florence till November and only go to Vallombrosa for shadow and rest intermediately. The plan of plans would be for him to join us here in October or November, and then that we should travel together to Rome for the winter, and so escape the cough he had last year. Would it not be wise and pleasant? Observe that the pleasantest things are often the wisest.

Is nobody out of Wimpole Street going up the Rhine this year, pray? If George will spend his vacation so, we will house him and love him here at Florence—tell him *that* from me, dear George! To us it would be pure pleasure and nothing less. I don't speak vain words now. . . .

Will Miss Mitford call on you, I wonder. Mind you see her, if you have the opportunity. I have not heard from her these three months, and am set wondering; and perhaps the wondered first at my silence, her previous letter having reached me when I was unequal to any sort of writing. Explain, when you see her.

Economical people you and Arabel are, to make Arabella Bevan's bridal bonnets do such double duty. My white crape one, bought the other day, is positively waxing dusty. The dust here is like the smoke in London: if we return presently to Florence, I must get Wilson to cover it, I almost fear. My

little front-caps you asked about, she makes very prettily of net in the old fashion, but with a worsted edge, as slight as possible to be embroidered at all. You think they look heavy and hot? Not the least; and so they are washable like a pockethandkerchief, and very pretty, at the expense of a few pennies—(Seven pence a cap!) I advise you to try the morning effect of one. Robert likes them so that I scarcely wear anything else, and have them in various colours, blue, green, lilac, purple, with my hair done in the old Grecian plait behind, which Wilson sighs in the doing of, and unflatteringly (yet oh, so pleasant!) refers to the old days when "Miss Arabel's looked beautiful, plaited in that way." There is no ribbon, except for the strings—he hates ribbon, and prefers everything as simple and quiet as possible, and we never quarrel about the more or less glory—yes, I think my gloves were accused of a want of brightness one day! charged with dirtiness and a hole: but even then we didn't quarrel. I was calm and changed them.

Don't I improve in wisdom and drawing? Really it seems so to me! This half page could scarcely be exceeded perhaps on either ground; and it must explain a little by the intense heat of the weather, in which one's brains melt away, and one's paper *perspires* in the manner of blotting paper, and for every hair line you wish to make, you make a tail.

Talking of hair, I was observing to Robert the other day, à propos to a little girl of about fourteen who was beginning to be quite bald at the forehead and temples, how curiously the Italians are defective in this respect of baldness—as I told Arabel in opposition to her fancy.

"Why," he said, "don't you know the meaning of that? They never comb their hair."

He assured me it was simply so; and that at Naples the women plaited up their long tresses in silver and gold and went on—sleeping, waking, eating, living, till the plait and the silver were apt to drop off together. The little girl, aforesaid, opened the gate to us when we went the other evening to see Galileo's villa, where Milton visited him, at the top of one of the beautiful hills round Florence. We drove there one

evening, and had the honour of being jammed in, on the road, with the Grand Duke's carriage, who in return for our respectful salutation, took off his hat in the sun. We were on our way, for our parts, to see higher dignities—the place of Milton's and Galileo's steps. The villa itself too, apart from association, was worth seeing—perched on a green eminence, a little terrace overlooking beautiful Florence, garlanded with olive yards and vineyards, and shining with her own marbles ; and if the eye sweeps beyond—mountains, mountains on all sides ! We were struck with a sudden temptation (at least *I* was) to take some rooms in the villa (which we might do) and be false to Vallombrosa : but no, after all it was not worth the monastery and the forests and besides Robert spoilt everything by suggesting :

" And the sightseers who come day by day—what should we do with the sightseers ? "

No, it would not have answered our purpose at all. . . .

Tell Arabel that Mr. Powers' Eve is not in London—is not finished in fact. He has exhibited only the Greek Slave, of last year or the year before, and the Boy listening to the shell, in the present. I wish in return that she would tell *me* the last artist to whom the new pictures in Wimpole Street are attributed. The great Christ over the fire—to whom ? The Holy Family to the left—to whom ? Are there any other pictures bought ? Tell me. You would smile to see how interested I have grown in the Jamaica crops, &c. Robert shows me the least of the news that way, and certainly it never interested me so before. But I think now of the pleasure it gives my poor dearest papa. I like to think that he is in good spirits. As to dear dear Stormie, it is not for his sake so much. Crops are not wanted to make him rich. Let me have every detail of him ; and mind you get him to write to me. Wilson (who is delighted, by the way, with your remembrance of her) complains grievously of dear Minny never writing. Her sister has not written. Exiles, like us, care for letters, as no one else in the world can—except lovers. Remember *that*, all of you. Only my sisters are perfect—almost perfect—for I waited too long for the last letter. Tell Arabel, who doesn't

like to hear it, that Robert hears from home just three times to my hearing !—not long letters though—it's fair to say.

While we were at breakfast this morning came a card and a note :

" Will Mr. and Mrs. Browning permit a young American, who has known them in his own home, to obtrude on their seclusion for a few moments by paying them his respects ? "

Only the second American since we have been in Florence ; and nobody could be angry. I think I told you of the other visit, and of the American newspaper which was sent to our visitor, containing an extract from a French paper which mentioned piteously that the English poetess E. B. B. had *gone blind* as people say of horses.

Wilson has at last (talking of eyes) ventured into the gallery : but she only went to the door of the Tribune, being struck back by the indecency of the Venus. I laughed—laughed when she told me. She thinks she shall try again, and the troublesome modesty may subside—who knows ? but really the sight of that marble Goddess and Titian's (painted stark, just overhead,) were too much at first. She is quite well, and so am I, in spite of the heat. Florence would agree, I think, with any one.

Tell my dearest Trippy that my heart sprang up to meet her message. I do like so much to be still and ever her " precious child." Tell her that I love her dearly, and that Robert and I in having our coffee from her gift, talk of her often and often as if we both loved her—as we do. May God bless you all ! Darling Arabel will mind to write soon, and then you—to your own affectionate

Ba.

7

A letter at short notice—A miracle of happiness—Keeping the Day—The " Flitch " and figs : an unfair division—Italian climate—The terrace at moonrise—Mr. Kenyon cannot come—Home news and Jamaica.

Lizzie Barrett afterwards married E. B. B.'s brother Alfred.

Florence,
August 2, 1847.

This is the first of the two letters due to you my ever dearest Henrietta, and it will be shorter than usual, seeing that Robert is suddenly going to send home and offers to make room for me if I make haste. The condition must be kept therefore. Thanks many and warm, for my dearest Arabel's letter yesterday and your note inside. How I thank you both ! how dear you are and kind ! What should I do without you, even with Robert here ? Your letters seem to draw us all close together. I love and thank you from the bottom of my heart my dearest kindest sisters. May God bless you beyond my love and thanks !

Why in the world, now, was Arabel uneasy about me ? Oh, do put down such fancies, you dear Things. I am as well as possible—and really the chief reason for anxiety for me is, that, being supernaturally happy, the miracle mayn't be expected to go on in this mortal atmosphere. It couldn't, I suppose,—if there were not a leaven to leaven it all, in the separation from dear papa and you all ; and in not seeing Arabel and you —and for the rest, nothing could be changed except by losing something ; and I at the end almost of our first year of marriage ! Tell Arabel she is impertinent ! We began by keeping " The Day " one a week—but since the weeks have multiplied themselves so often by four, it's celebrated only once a month. Oh, *I* shouldn't remember. I never can think of the day of the month you know. But Robert reminds me without once failing.

" Do you recollect what to-morrow will be ? "

" What to-day is ? "

I tell him that he keeps it two or three times in the month, instead of once. At any rate the echo is very long. Ah yes—Do think of us on the twelfth of September. We have not made up our minds how to celebrate it, but the celebration is to be august anywise ; and we talk of claiming that ideal " Flitch " promised to people a year married who never have quarrelled. Only, as I say to Robert, it will scarcely be a fairly devised recompense, because he will have the bacon

to himself, and I the beans ; and that won't be fair, will it ? It's bad enough that he has the figs every day, and I sit by never touching them—for I do *not* like figs. I never did, you know, and having tried again with all my might, I can't like them—not even the look of them—though these Florentine figs are considered peculiarly good, and are *great*, I will answer for it. We have a large dish of the finest for a penny, and always I think of papa, when they are brought to table. In a week, the grapes begin ; and in the meanwhile we have immense melons, a penny each. Consider how the poor must rejoice in all this fruit—heaps and heaps of fruit that might have ripened in Paradise ! and they make fruit a large proportion of their diet, here, and it is very wholesome on account of the climate.

Why how hot you must have been in England ! We were at 86 by the thermometer, but that was the highest ; and Wilson and I agree that the meaning of heat in Italy is a different thing from what it is in England—the air is so much lighter and more elastic with us than with you. Then the little wind which regularly rises at six o'clock and blows the curtains in and out. And the construction of the houses—the great windows. Throughout the summer I have lived in the open air I may say correctly. We never shut the windows—only the green blinds—Venetian blinds—by day and night : and as they open from ceiling to floor, it is precisely as if one lived out of doors, you see. There's no fog—no falling of dew—none you could detect : and I have not had the slightest cold since I left home. Of course, so much of the outward air is strengthening and reviving, where it does not injure, and accounts for my progress in health and change of appearance.

We more and more like our new apartment. When I am tired of the sofa I get *into* the window in one of the deep spring-chairs—as soft as if it were made of a cloud : and after our coffee at half past seven, we regularly go out to walk on our terrace, where there is just room for two to walk—walk backward and forward till the moon rises ! it's so easy, when one is tired, to step in at the window and drop into a chair. And the moon rises beautifully, and drops down the grey wall of

San Felice, and it's altogether delightful to walk there without one's bonnet and talk of going to Rome or of loving you, or—even of keeping the twelfth of September.

The weather is cooler, rather than it was, at least this apartment is much cooler, and the thermometer was under eighty all yesterday. Indeed we have not once repented of our resolve to stay in Florence through the hot months. We have suffered by it in no degree. Yet it was very vexatious to hear yesterday from dear Mr. Kenyon that he is not coming to us—no, he is not coming; though he means to cross the Alps perhaps, as far as the northern lakes—being involved in a plan which excludes us. They can't afford the time, it appears, and Mr. Kenyon's own time is short. He does not even see his brother, in Vienna. So we might as well have gone to Perugia or elsewhere—Never mind!—Nobody regrets time spent at Florence, and we have been especially happy here.

What good delightful news of dearest Stormie! And I dare say Papa is pleased! and after all, Jamaica appears cooler than Italy this summer. Tell Stormie that he is not to let the humming of the bees be too loud for thoughts of me. . . .

We continue to live in the quietest fashion possible. Love to every one who remembers me—to Susan and Surtees always—to dear little Lizzie Barrett. How I love you. Soon you shall have a " second letter " better worth receiving, I do trust. I am with you every hour of the day in thought and love.

Your own

BA. (in the utmost haste).

8

A festa on their wedding-day—Comparison with England—Italy, Austria and the Pope—Robert ill—Increasing happiness—Knead cakes—Flush runs away—The sisters' letters—England and the poor—Visit from Miss Boyle.

The Risorgimento stirred Mrs. Browning's deepest sympathies. A United Italy seemed at hand, what with popular enthusiasm, with the Pope, Pio Nono, in a temporary access of liberalism, and a possible liberator from across the Alps in the person of Napoleon II. The Austrian-born

Leopold II, Grand Duke of Tuscany, granted his people a constitution and even a National Guard, despite the mandates of Austria. Unhappily he was expelled by the revolutionary party, recanted his liberalism, and was brought back by Austrian bayonets. Put not your trust in princes, said E. B. B. after the event.

Trippy, once more, is Mary Trepsack, an old member of the Barrett household.

Knead cakes, otherwise girdle cakes, were a Northumbrian specialty, and among the Moultons and Barretts, themselves of Northumbrian descent, they were invariably baked to celebrate family festivals.

Miss Fanny Dowglass, who introduces Miss Boyle, was a friend living at Rome.

Florence,
Sept. 13, 1847.

My dearest both of you, how shall I thank you adequately for your kindest of letters, which happily came on the wrong day, Saturday, inasmuch as if it had come on the twelfth we should have missed it till Monday, it being impossible to force one's way to the post office through the crowded streets. Robert expected a letter from home and had to give it up—the thing was impossible. The fact was, that our Italians had resolved to keep our day for us on a most magnificent scale ; an intention which we, on our parts, not only generously appropriated, but permitted in return to perfect the glory by keeping at the same time the establishment of the civic guard and prospect of the liberty of Italy through union. Ah, you should have seen our day ! Forty thousand strangers were in Florence—I mean, inhabitants of the different Tuscan states, deputations and companies of various kinds ; and for above three hours the infinite procession filed under our windows—with all their various flags and symbols, into the Piazza Pitti where the Duke and his family stood in tears at the window to receive the thanks of his people. Never in the world was a more affecting sight—nor a grander if you took it in its full significance. The magistracy came first, with their flag, and then the priesthood—and then and then—class after class—troops of peasants and nobles, and of soldiers fraternizing

with the people. Then, too, came the foreigners, there was a place for them ; and there are so many foreign residents here, that it was by no means unimportant to admit their sympathy, —French, English, Swiss, Greeks (such a noble band of Greeks !) all with their national flags. Meanwhile there was no lack of spectators. The windows dropping down their glittering draperies, seemed to grow larger with the multitude of pretty heads, and of hands which threw out flowers and waved white handkerchiefs. There was not an inch of wall, not alive, if the eye might judge. Clouds of flowers and of laurel leaves came fluttering down on the advancing procession ; and the clapping of hands, and the frenetic shouting, and the music which came in gushes, and then seemed to go out with too much joy, and the exulting faces, and the kisses given for very exultation between man and man, and the mixing of elegantly dressed women in all that crowd and turbulence, with the sort of smile which proved how little cause there was for fear—all these features of the scene made it peculiar, and memorable and most beautiful to look at and to look back upon. We went to a window in our palazzo which had a full view, and I had a throne of cushions piled up on a chair, but was dreadfully tired before it was all over, in spite of them, as you may suppose from the excitement of such a scene. And then Robert and I waved our handkerchiefs till my wrist ached, I will answer for mine. At night there was an illumination, and we walked just to the Arno to have a sight of it ; and then the streets were as crowded as a full route in London might be, only with less pushing probably, and with the soft starry air in change of a stifling atmosphere. And even *then*, the people were *embracing* for joy. It was a state of phrensy or rapture, extending to the children of two years old, several of whom I heard lisping " *Vivas*," with their fat arms clasping their mothers' necks.

So wasn't our day kept well for us ? Yes, and without a single discord to mar the harmony. You never see drunkenness nor brutality in any form in the gladness of these Tuscans. You never see fighting with fists, nor hear blasphemous language. It is the sort of gladness in which women may mingle

and be glad too. Our poor English want educating into gladness. They want refining not in the fire but in the sunshine. How different a thing a crowd is here to an English crowd, you must come here to learn. Yet whose is the fault, I wonder? And why should it be so, with all our advantages and larger constitutional rights? One reason is that our religious teachers in England do not sanctify the relaxations of the people. The narrowness which cuts down literature and refuses to accept Art into the uses of the Christian life, is more rife with injury and desecration than you see at a first glance. It is a worse mistake than marrying and feasting on fridays, and other fast-days—and we should repent it in the ashes of ash-wednesdays, if people repent deepest really in such ashes. Some may say that it wasn't a very perfect keeping of sunday yesterday even though it did perfectly for our anniversary. The whole company, of which the procession consisted, went in the first place to the cathedral, observe, the great Duomo, (where nobody unconnected with the ceremony was admitted, for the plain reason that there was no room) and then the banners were blessed, and the "Veni Creator" and "Te Deum" sung in choral magnificence, and I could not, for my part, take it for desecration, when the next movement brought them to thank their sovereign, and fraternize in hope with one another. Besides their view of the meaning of the "Lord's Day" is different you know from the general view of it in England.

And now, pray don't take it into your dear imaginations that Italy is in arms, and that I am on the eve of being massacred. You and dearest Trippy may set your hearts at ease, on the contrary, for the safety of my head. The excitement here which certainly exists, and is at its height perhaps in Tuscany just now, is all joyous and good and innocent and *preventive* of evil. If Italians join hands, Austria may throw in vain her poisoned arrows; and the noise we hear is only the clash of the gauntlets as friend meets friend. Every Austrian in Florence was desired to keep the house, yesterday, by an order of the police; and this because it had been discovered that here, as lately in Rome, *paid Austrians* were in

league to produce disturbance in the streets, in order to justify the interference of the Austrian government. Is it not hateful and loathsome? Metternich puts out these fangs, trembling in his hole, poor reptile, for his power in Italy. Which may God shiver into dust. Our grand Duke has behaved well, I think. It was a hard position for him, himself an Austrian, and his family and associations leaning to absolutism naturally. But he sacrifices everything, and does it well and nobly, as if his heart helped him. After all, however, the Pope is the liberator. He is a great man. I call him *great*. Liberty seldom originates for a people from the throne. I think I must go to see him when we go to Rome to express by that act what a man I hold him to be. And it is expected that after the court of the sanctuary, he means to wash the sanctuary itself,—to reform the priesthood (which requires it, as some of the laity know.) A most devout man, he is said to be, and brave and gentle at once; and as the people in Rome adore him, he may attempt very nearly what he pleases without fear of being accused of heresy. He rides about the streets on a mule, they say, and dreams by night and day, of doing good *humbly*. Think of such a Pope!

And of such a letter too! You will be tired of it and of me long and long before this, I am certain. So let me go on and tell you of our day. The worst of it was that Robert was not well—he had caught cold and felt unwell for several days, and yesterday he was as languid, as languid—and looked so pale—and of course it spoiled our good spirits rather, though he made me very happy by saying again and again such things as can't be repeated nor forgotten, besides, that never in his life, from his joyous childhood upwards, had he enjoyed such happiness as he had known with me. Too happy it makes me to hear such things! Indeed if the perfectest love and sympathy can give any happiness, we both enjoy it. There has not been a cloud, nor a breath. The only difference is from happy to happier, and from being loved to being loved more. When he says he loves me more, I see that it is just so. Every word I say is something right and bright, let it be ever so dull: and if I say nothing, why then, I am sure to be looking

right, or pouring out coffee right, or listening divinely to something said to me, so that mine is not a difficult part by any manner of means. Wilson made us knead cakes yesterday ; and we had them for tea at seven o'clock.

But now I am going to tell you how a cloud came. Robert, as I said, was not well, and did not take his walk as usual with Flush for company ; and, therefore, because we hold it necessary for Flush to have daily exercise we sent him down stairs with Annunciata just for one run. Well—not only did he run, but he ran away. A little dog passed at the moment, and after the dog he went, and upstairs without him came Annunciata.

" Oh," said she, " è niente ! Tornerà presto, presto "—and really I thought he might be back soon : but hours passed, and no Flush. Wasn't it too bad of him to spoil our wedding day so ? As it grew darker and darker the tears could scarcely be kept out of my eyes, for Flush has a new collar and I feared that he might be stolen by one of the forty thousand visitors, and so farewell to poor Flush. And so passed the night. The porter left open the gates till twelve o'clock—but not a sign of Flush ; and when Wilson came to dress me in the morning no Flush, no Flush ! (Robert had gone round to Piazza Pitti in vain, I forgot to say : but then who could see a dog in that crowd.) Well, while I was dressing in the morning and sighing over all these vicissitudes, in the most melancholy of moods, a dash was made against the door of the room which either betokened Flush or the devil—and of the two you may suppose that it was Flush. Yes ! he had come back and lain down at the entrance of our apartment, and a charitable person had let him in ; and very guilty he looked and tired, as if he had been running about all night.

" Quite disgraceful for a respectable dog like him," as Robert said reproachfully.

But I don't doubt that the great crowd and confusion and illumination of the night before had frightened and confounded him, and that he had lost himself completely. In the calm of the morning he had recovered his head a little—poor Flush —and in this way the evil was remedied.

Ah, you dearest kindest best Henrietta and Arabel, how I thank you from my heart of hearts for your dear letters and tender words. First I read your letters always to myself, and then Robert sits down by me to hear everything that is not too secret. Well, I read your letter so, to him, yesterday, Henrietta —and then I began Arabel's, without the precaution this time of reading it to myself. I managed it all very well until I came to that part where she spoke of praying for me in the place where we used to pray together, and there, I could not get on but burst out crying in the most unforeseen way possible, which was unfortunate, for he hates to see me cry and began to look a little unhappy himself just for company. Yet it grew better by degrees, and at last nothing was left but the brightness of knowing how you both love me who love you back again from the soul of my soul—dearest things! May we look on one another's face before long. I long to see you!

We have had a great fair here, and the cheapness of everything is miraculous. Such prices only account for the elegance of the women of all classes, which strikes foreigners so much on the frequent festa-day. Otherwise it would be a problem to solve. Our baker's wife is an Englishwoman married to a German, and she said to Wilson:

"Ah, you may talk on England—everyone does that! but when you go back you will cry your eyes out for Italy, just as I did when I thought I would return, and then longed to get out of it all again. England is not the place for the poor. They are treated like dogs there, and never enjoy anything like other human beings. The rich on one side, the poor on another—that's the way in England. Here we are all men and women and can reach to the same pleasures."

Which has a great deal of truth in it. I am jealous for poor England. Why should not her people be as happy? Why should I pay here only three pence for *two* large soft spunges, for which in London I should pay some ten shillings? Wilson has this instant brought them in to my utter astonishment. She says that though the fair is done, she can get things even cheaper, and has bought some more neck ribbons three half pence a yard. We are providing ourselves with

every thing at Florence, because Rome has a reputation of being dearer and more difficult.

And now I am about to tell you of a new visitor we have had. I found a letter on the table from a Miss Boyle enclosing a note of introduction from Miss Dowglass, who said by the way that she knew nothing scarcely of Miss Boyle except that she was in deep anxiety to find out, having been already introduced to Mr. Browning ! ! &c. &c. and intimated that we both should know in the flash of a thought all about the said Miss Boyle, she being a notorious personage. Well ! Robert and I looked into one another's faces in blank confusion. How could he remember an introduction in London, one of the many ? and as for me I had never heard of her, I thought. So I wrote back to Miss Dowglass beseeching her to send us a key ; and I wrote to Miss Boyle, who had invited us to her villa in her mother's name, that I had not been much out lately but would gladly receive her in Florence if she thought it worth while to call on us.

1st answered Miss Dowglass, from the Baths of Lucca, that Miss Boyle was the daughter of Lady Boyle, sister of the queen Dowager's maid of honour, niece to Lord Cork, and authoress of certain poems—that she had met Robert, whom she excessively admired, at Lady Morgan's, and had just began a conversation with him in the hollow of a window—when the lady of the house spoilt it all—that knowing Miss Dowglass slightly she had caught sight of my books on the table and had began to enquire eagerly " where Mr. and Mrs. Browning were, whom she had hunted for in vain through Pisa and Florence—she had heard of their having gone into Switzerland."

2d answered Miss Boyle that she would come ! and she came straightway, at a most unfortunate moment, Wilson and Annunciata being both out, and Robert opening the door of our apartment, without the prestige of the cravat—unanealed, uncravatted—in the merest, wildest state of dishabille. He has the art, however, of making the best of a situation, and managed to laugh us back into respectability, and to be so cordial to the visitor that she condescended to say :

" Oh, you ought to see me and my sister in the morning ! "

As for me I had been lying prostrate on the sofa and leapt up in horror ; and if really, as he assured me afterwards, my hair and appurtenances were " just perfect," it was a miracle of the uncommonest.

" Here's Miss Boyle, Ba, come to see you," did confound me utterly, I must admit. But she seemed, after all, good natured, and was clever in conversation and made herself a good place at last. " A little lively aristocrat," as Robert describes her well—and somewhat better under and over. He remembered about her in a moment when Lady Morgan's name was mentioned, and says she is the " crème de la crème " in London society, with certain literary pretensions to boot Almacks. Clever and original she certainly seemed in her talk, and she sate an hour with us and " hoped to come again." Lord Holland had lent Lady Boyle the villa Carreggi and they had been there for months without suspecting that we were not in Switzerland, when a chance took Miss Boyle to Lucca Baths, and threw her in with Miss Dowglass. The latter rides out a good deal—" gallops "—it is her favourite exercise. How much better she must be to admit of this !

Give my love to Surtees and Susan. We are all very sorry to leave Florence ; and I assure you Wilson has been invited to go to England for a husband and return with him to settle here. It doesn't seem so bad a plan to her, I fancy, as it would at one time. We are each of us " taken " in a different charm. Yet we go, and go on monday the twentieth, having doubted to the last : but the winter prices (just double in these rooms) coming in to turn the scales. Also it is better perhaps on all accounts to travel now. We shall be ten days on the road which is usually travelled in five : but probably you shall hear again before we set out. I am perfectly well. Don't be afraid of the Austrians, nor Italians either. Tell Arabel it would be impossible to get a passport at this time for Palermo, Naples and Calabria being in actual revolt. The Reynolds's won't go to Naples we prophesy. In other parts of Italy, where the government gives signs of sympathy with the people, there is no reason to fear for the tranquillity and safety of any one.

Tell my dear dear Trippy that her note shall be answered to herself and that meanwhile I love and kiss her through the air for it. Robert was so gratified, and both of us grateful. God Bless you. Your own

BA.

9

The Barretts at Bognor—Strain of letter-writing—Rome renounced in favour of Florence—Other rooms in the Via Maggio, instead of Palazzo Guidi—R. B.'s care—Possible visitors from home—"The Major's Minor"—Annoyance of being talked over—Italian climate—Lost jewellery—The Hanfords and Reynoldses—A leakage of correspondence—Another festa; a taste for festas—Write, write, write.

During their sojourn in Florence, the Brownings stayed in five different sets of apartments:

1. Furnished rooms in the Via delle Belle Donne; from their arrival on April 20, 1847, to August.

2. Furnished rooms in the Palazzo Guidi for a couple of months.

3. Similar rooms in the Via Maggio (Letter 9) taken for six months, but, as they made E. B. B. ill, abandoned within ten days, with compensation to the owner by payment of the agreed rent until the rooms should be re-let.

4. Furnished rooms on the Piazza Pitti, for six months from early in October till April.

5. Unfurnished rooms in the Palazzo Guidi again, for which they provided furniture of their own out of the two last years' proceeds of their books, from May 1848. This was their final "Casa Guidi." The plan was thought of, though not adopted in February, 1848. See Letter 12. It solved the problem of making their small income carry them to England in any summer. A pied à terre which cost them next to nothing while they occupied it, could be let for £8 or £10 a month while they travelled. The revolutionary panic of 1848 had also scared away the tiresome English "society" of Florence, and this, it is whispered in Mrs. Jameson's sympathetic ear, helped to give Robert courage to settle down here.

Fanny Dowglass was a friend in Rome, see Letter 8. "The Major's Minor" is the lady of Letter 3, whose back had

had been put up by her landlord's lying boasts about the Brownings.

For the adventures of Vallombrosa, see Letter 6, Introduction.

Of the various people mentioned, Mr. Jago is their doctor ; Clara Lyndsay, a friend travelling in Italy, who had invited Arabel to join her. Mrs. Irving, Lady St. Germans, Lady Caroline and Lady Margaret Cocks, Lord Eastnor, were all English visitors to Florence. For Mr. Surtees, see Letters 2 and 6 ; the Hanfords, Letter 5.

Mr. and Mrs. Martin, of Old Colwall, Herefordshire, were much loved friends of E. B. B.'s.

Cousin Arlette (Butler) and her husband, Captain Reynolds, were honeymooning in Italy. Anne was her maid. For Lady Bolingbroke's activities, see Letters 2 and 10.

Florence,
October, 1847.

My dearest Henrietta,

Your turn is it not ? My ever dearest Henrietta, then—I write to you in a first moment of *decision*, after having been cast to and fro like Sancho Panza in the blanket these many days. I really began to think that we never should get settled again ; and as Robert neither eats nor sleeps when he is anxious, it was gradually growing to be more important to me, (this state of uncertainty,) than might seem to be reasonable.

I meant to write to her this time : but as you bid me write in time to Bognor, why I am afraid to put off your letter any longer, and must choose another moment for hers. Moreover, Robert takes it into his head that my cheeks are flushed whenever I write (and he is not far wrong in saying so,) and that therefore writing can't be good for me (and he *is* wrong there) which brings on me such a flood of reproaches that generally I yield the point (of the pen) just as if I wholly agreed with him, which I don't.

Now let me tell you of ourselves. Believe or do not believe in our superhuman virtue (mine especially) but the truth is that we had really decided against Rome before Mr. Jago's decision set the seal on ours. In the first place, Robert was frightened about the journey for me, which even in a private carriage, (and he was actually trying hard to persuade himself

that it would be the *cheapest* plan to buy a britska, a pair of horses and a coachman, to drive about Rome in after the completion of the journey) which even, in this said easy britska, seemed to present certain risks. And in the second place we had the kindest letter from Fanny Dowglass who had taken all sorts of trouble for us and exhorted us to come and choose between various uncomfortable and dirty kinds of lodgment, at a high price. Now, as Robert said, here was I going to Rome to *pay* for being shut up in an uncomfortable way, just within reach of temptation ; and to pay too for this discomfort, just when we were likely to want money and to want comfort more than usual. It seemed foolish of us altogether. It seemed wise to wait for the opportunity which God may one day give us, of going to Rome when we can enjoy it, see the wonders of it, and feel better fortified against the drawbacks. Florence is full of beauty which by putting out one's hand it is possible to touch ; and full of luxuries too at the very cheapest rate. And as to the climate, why the objection is the liability to cold winds, which I, with my habits, would never think of going out in. The sun is Italian—and so is the weather generally—neither gloomy nor variable ; and the winter is a short one. (If we chose to go on the Arno, it would be over-hot ; and indeed I should not dare to agree to taking an apartment for six months in that situation, lest Robert and Wilson should both of them be laid up with bilious fever about April.) Therefore Florence seems to me a very safe residence for me, as to climate, under certain conditions. It would not be worth returning to Pisa, I think, on the mere ground of climate. Florence would be dangerous to *restless invalids* who, because they are in Italy, think it incumbent to go out every day, and unnecessary to choose sheltered walks when they go : for the heat is unequally distributed here, that one street seems a funnel for hot air, and another for cold ; and the transitions are of course fatal to chest-complaints where the owners are indiscreet and incautious. But I never go out at all on cold days. I did not, you know, at Pisa ; and in going out, always I am satisfied with sheltered walks, though so " wonderfully imprudent," tell Arabel. I am not in the least afraid therefore

of wintering here, and shall not take advantage of Mr. Jago's permission to return to Pisa which as a residence is so inferior in all ways. So resolving to remain at Florence we had to determine on an apartment : and first of all we had an idea of keeping on our grandiosity in Palazzo Guidi, and very nearly came to an arrangement, and the padrone will repent his refusal of our terms, it seems to me, considering the length of our residence. It is very different to let rooms at high rates for three or four months, and for six. But no, we divided upon two scudi at last. After all it is better perhaps, for we should have found it difficult to warm such immense rooms, and really we didn't want to give balls or to receive forty people to dinner or anything of that especial sort. Well ! Robert went from one side of Florence to another, and I lay on the sofa making all sorts of objections to every apartment he could find—which sounds amiable of me, particularly as he neither ate nor slept in the interim as I explained before. You see it was rather serious to settle for six months, and to make (besides) what might prove an unpleasant transition from those rooms we liked so much. The Arno-rooms were too hot and too high up—with a splendid view of the river, said Robert—but oh, so hot, and oh so high ! At last we had to hesitate between an apartment on the Piazza Santa Maria Novella, on the first floor, but somewhat dingy, and away from all the *festas*—and a little baby-house kind of place in the Piazza Pitti close by. Such tiny rooms ! The drawing room with a sofa like a board, five little chairs, and one large comfortable one ; and where to put the grand piano (to say nothing of other grand ideas) was a problem. But the situation. Observe—three sides of the Piazza are filled by the Palace Pitti, and at the bottom is the row of houses in question, for most part having very small rooms. The only vacant apartment, this proposed one of ours —a bad staircase, steep and narrow ; and on the second floor the people agreeing to take us for twenty scudi a month, that is four pounds nine shillings. As nearly as possible we were to taking it, though very possibly we might have fallen there on a single spoon. At least everything seemed scanty and over-simple. A champagne-glass was like a roc's egg. So at last,

we determined on an apartment in via Maggio (the same street as Palazzo Guidi's) where we settled yesterday,—an apartment on the first floor, the drawing room small, but pretty, everything most complete, in the way of furniture and comforts, even to cut glass bottles for perfume, and toilette pincushions. My room is faultless, and the Princess of Wirtemburg performed her accouchment there to the general satisfaction. Our padrone was courier to Prince Albert, and the Duchess of Cambridge ; and his wife being a Frenchwoman, they understand the whole theory of " what is and should be," and nothing falls short. For this we pay what we paid at Pisa, five pounds, seven shillings, (a month), much more than we meant to pay ; and the drawback is that we shall not have much sun—still, the double doors and closely fitting windows, and stoves, seem to promise a sufficient warmth. The provoking thing is that since we settled, our people at Palazzo Guidi have intimated that they were ready to accept our terms rather than part with us ; and I don't like to say to Robert how provoked I am to think of it. He has been fussed enough as it is—thinking never of himself, (as usual) and always of me and of my comfort in the whole arrangement. Besides, we shall do very well here I dare say ; and presently we shan't miss so much our terrace, and the other attractions of our old domain. One advantage is that the nights are more silent,—my bedroom looking into a court-yard. A spring sofa and two or three spring arm chairs—plenty of luxury of that sort.

And now for the plan. Observe the crosses (x) are windows, and the squares □ doors. . . .

You see it isn't as compact as our old apartment, though so much smaller. The drawing room is pretty. A French clock (which really goes) and a chaise longue which draws out and was particularly recommended to my attention by the lady of the house. I have been trying to pull about the furniture into graceful disorder : but must be contented at last with having the piano and the sofa wherever they please to stand.

Since we came here and your last letter came to Florence, Robert has continually been talking of Arabel's coming—wishing her to come—proving how we should be able to have

the advantage of her darling presence and companionship. Ah, how Clara Lyndsay's kind proposal made my heart leap within me! Too tantalizing it was! Only we could not have let her go to Rome—she would have been forced to stay at Florence till we went ourselves. And what comfort, what consolation! But I suppose I might as well wish for an angel straight from Heaven in apocalypse, and therefore there's little use talking.

I will tell you whom we have had instead—*the Major's minor from Pisa!* The stars mix in these things, or I scarcely should have believed it. Do you remember my pet enemy and vis à vis who talked of Mrs. Browning giving herself such wonderful airs and trying to buy her house over her head at any price demanded? They came to Florence about the time we did, (their maid by the bye is an acquaintance of Wilson's,) went away in the summer, and have returned for the winter and taken an apartment close at hand in the Piazza Pitti. Robert was calling on the Irvings and met all three, Major, wife, and daughter; and to his surprise, two cordial hands were extended—" Having had the satisfaction of a letter from him " (much like the satisfaction of being shot through the head) " they must become acquaintances. Mrs. L—— must do herself the pleasure of paying a visit to Mrs. Browning," &c. &c. So of course he could only say that we should be glad to see them, and the whole three poured in about three mornings ago. They have been used to good society, I should say. Nothing could be more friendly than their manner, and I gave them a history of our adventures at Vallombrosa to break the ice.

As to Mr. Irving I do really like him—he comes very often to sit with us, and so does his son the young man, who is intelligent enough and in so sad a state of health that one is glad to enliven him now and then. Robert likes Mrs. Irving: but they all return to Pisa in about ten days, much to the despair of the wife and son. As for Mr. Irving himself he has a crochet about Florence and pretends to abuse it—calls it as bad as Bath or Cheltenham—which perhaps after all it may be to persons up to their neck in English society, who are forced to float with the stream. He told Robert the other day that

Lady St. Germans had been enquiring about me with the deepest interest, and that Lady Caroline Cocks had said so and so, and that Lord Eastnor had passed through Florence—all in a breath!! Lady St. Germans' "deep interest" I can appreciate. You remember one morning when I visited Lady Margaret at her house—but it all means, I suppose, that I have been thoroughly talked over, which doesn't so much please me. There's the worst of a congregation of one's beloved countrymen! Not that one need so very much mind.

Poor Mr. Surtees was here for a few days, and Wilson met him in the street looking altered and thin, she thought—and now he is gone back to Pisa with his daughter who is said to be better in health. Everything I ever heard for good of an Italian climate, my experience acquiesces in—it is all but divine, perfect, that is, and the very breathing of the air grows upon you like a luxury.

Oh—I always forget, so let me while I remember it "par exception" say to Arabel about the loss of the brooch, that as nearly as possible I lost her hair out of my ring, but didn't—because when the glass was gone I became aware of the disaster and stopped its progress. For the brooch, as far as can be remedied, one day it shall.

I am glad about Fanny Hanford, liking her much for both her own sake and dear Mrs. Martin's: but it is a melancholy prospect this going to Ireland for the approaching winter. Why could he not appoint a liberal and merciful agent, he who is rich? with weak health on his side and hers, I do not think that the duty of residing there at such an obvious risk can be imperative. You wicked person, Henrietta—you, who "don't publish my letters," you say! How then, did Mrs. Martin opine so and so? Tell her if you write, that we will take the sunniest rooms for her and Mr. Martin, if they will but come to Florence directly.

Will the Reynolds's find us out, do you suppose in Florence? Of course they will stay here for a while to see the works of art, or they will be barbarians—and Robert took it into his fantasy that he actually met them in a lodging in the Pitti—only *that* must have been pure fantasy. If they come I *should* like to

see them certainly—I should like to " realize " him, as the Americans say, though I do seem to know the man already. Perhaps they won't guess at our being here. It was wrong of Arlette (wasn't it) not to take poor Anne with her. Wrong and perhaps foolish—it would have been a comfort to have with her one who was attached to her, and not mercenary. Anne always calculated on being her own maid when she married.

Oh, I wonder whether when Robert takes this letter to the post he will bring me back another. I long for Arabel's so, which she promised in the crossing of Mrs. Martin's. Indeed, Henrietta, N—— N—— is full of excellence, and since for my sake you will like her, I am sure that for her own you will never learn to unlike. Thank you, dearest Henrietta. Do tell me of Arabella Bevan.

We have had another great festa here in honour of our Grand Duke who deserved it: five hundred waxen torches, each nearly as large as a tree, carried alight through the darkness. It was splendid, and the enthusiasm of the people, most moving. I have caught a taste for *festas* lately; and have had to explain to Robert (who was really calculating on it as if it were my necessity of life and I couldn't live out of Piazza Pitti and the immediate neighbourhood accordingly) that after all I was not literally such a " baby " as the facts seemed to prove. Here in Via Maggio we are better situated for the festas than even in Palazzo Guidi—(besides)—and it wasn't needful to go on the Pitti for such a cause as that.

Lady Bolingbroke! She is good and kind. She will succeed, perhaps, in time. My love to your friends and mine. Mind you write, write, write, remembering that you can't do it often enough and that we are at Florence for six months! Mention Stormie. Robert bids me be affectionate to the uttermost for him, and I am your most attached

BA.

10

Letter-writing—The real meaning of "love"—Mr. Kenyon's will and trustees—Father Prout again—Miss Boyle and her forebears—Gerardine's youthful love-affair—Trippy—The abandoned lodgings—R. B.'s devotion—"Wifely obedience"—The Grand Duke's name-day—"Spheres of usefulness"—Flight from winter—Waiting for happy providences—Unsuitability of the abandoned lodgings—Lady Bolingbroke—Family greetings.

Aunt Jane is Mrs. Hedley.

Old Lady Cork's kleptomania was a notorious joke. Lady Bolingbroke is making suggestions about a post for Surtees Cook: see Letter 16.

Gerardine's love affair when she was barely eighteen, which so speedily broke off Mrs. Jameson's affectionate plans for her niece's future, "startled her, and, I fear, must be counted among the disappointments of her life." (*Life*, p. 243). But it turned out not to be the "sudden rash fancy on both sides" which she feared. It was justified by their constancy; and Mrs. Jameson writes happily of the event just after their marriage on September 4, 1849. (*Life*, p. 262.)

Florence,
November 23 and 24, 1847.

As it seems to be my most ungrateful and incredible habit to neglect thanking you for your letters let this begin by a heap of thanks, my own dearest Henrietta, for the last dear one, and for the promise of Arabel's, which I shall expect day by day. I can't understand how it was that I did not mention her letter and yours: but if either had not been received, you would have been sure to have heard of that in thunder, lightning, and in rain! As it is I rather am apt to grumble. You don't write often enough. Oh, not half! Just consider that there are two of you, and that I am sometimes a whole month without a line. Is it fair? Now consider. Ought I to be longer than ten days at furthest without hearing?

As to other things, Henrietta, it is like your affectionateness to say such and such words: but it is easier (forgive me) to *say them*, than to take them up as a creed as you expect me to do—*if* you expect it. Many exceed me in much—but I do pretend to know what love means; and I know that it does

not mean a mere sunshiney aspect while a person happens to please you in everything. If you committed a murder and were sent to Newgate, I should be at your side the next hour, if the thing were possible—*that* is what I mean by loving you—much more, if you chose to wear a peach-coloured gown while I thought green was becoming to you, would I take your hand in the street as warmly as if you had chosen the green. Much more, if you had run against me in the dark, meaning not to hurt me, would I hasten to prove to you that I did not mean to give you pain by disbelieving your assertion to such an effect. So you see that whichever way some circumstances are considered, an obvious conclusion from them can scarcely be altered. Not that I shall refer further to it—only don't misuse words, my own dear Henrietta. That *you* love me, has been most perfectly proved. Aunt Jane will have left England, I fear, before my letter can reach her. The " other trustee " is Mr. Arnold, the barrister, an intimate friend of Robert's. Oh, never mind the wills, dearest Henrietta,—nobody will die any sooner because of will-making. Mr. Kenyon is trustee, but declined the executorship on account of not being young enough.

Now let me look about for something to tell you. Robert came in from his walk the other evening with an " Ah, ha ! I have been kissed by somebody since I saw you last." I suppose he meant to make me dreadfully jealous ; instead of which I was seized with the most absurd, supernaturally absurd idea in the world ; for actually it came into my head that you and Arabel were in Florence—Arabel at any rate ! Yes, I thought it was Arabel ! Let that sublime touch of absurdity prove how much I think of you. Robert seeing me quite gasp for breath, hastened to explain that it was only his haunting friend, Father Prout, who spending an hour or two in Florence on his road to Rome, of course met Robert, and *kissed* him in the street, mouth to mouth, a good deal to his surprise. Father Prout, always very cordial, enquired about me with solicitude, reiterated his regret at my veil being down at Leghorn, keeping from him the light of my countenance. He is to send us from Rome a letter of introduction to our Grand Duke's librarian

of the Pitti, who is said to be a learned man and will give us access to men and books here. Father Prout was in too great haste, to go home with Robert and see his unveiled prophetess, so Robert went with him into a coffee-house and helped him into the diligence afterwards.

Then we had a visit a few evenings since, from Miss Boyle again. She came at half past eight and stayed till eleven—keeping us up against all precedent—and was very agreeable and kind, and took sandwiches. I like her. She expresses her "high breeding" with an amusing sort of restiveness. Robert who knows and remembers every thing just at the right moment, quoted a passage out of a quaint work by Robert Boyle her famous ancestor, and just stopped himself in time from a reference to the thieving propensities of her grandmother Lady Cork. She in the utmost good humour, caught up the abandoned hint and did not suffer us to languish over the said traditions, relating how her grandfather's horses and port wine were abstracted feloniously, with other interesting particulars.

"Did you never know her, Mr. Browning? I wonder you didn't."

Robert and Miss Boyle had the talking all their own way, and I the listening, which was better worth while.

So, Henrietta, you call me "sly" about Gerardine. Ah, but it wasn't my secret, observe, and then there had been such fuss and tribulation on the point up to this moment that I couldn't guess how it was to end. Gerardine when she travelled with us last year was only seventeen, and childish and unformed in many ways, though a most intelligent and quick-minded child, and from her education full of poetical taste and association. Mrs. Jameson who adored her, complained of her in the same breath; and Robert was given to making side-comments in my ear about that creature "as pure as the angels" who "couldn't be trusted to walk down a street by herself lest she should run away with the first man at the corner." In fact there were exaggerations in dear Mrs. Jameson's thoughts about Geddie—who was just a pretty, accomplished, gentle little girl, with some want of high motive

or apprehended duties—thinking how to please herself, and loving " aunt Nina " in a sort of indolent fashion, (enough to wish to please her too, if it could be done without much exertion)—but who was no more fitted to be what Mrs. Jameson desired, a *laborious artist*, than to fly up to Heaven like a lark. For ever and ever there were discussions about Gerardine's indolence, who had been besought to do this drawing or that, instead of which she lay in bed in the morning and played with Flush at night. She is such a gentle, caressing little creature, that I felt myself drawn to her side ; and I used to make heaps of excuses for her, for which she used silently to kiss my hands. And yet Mrs. Jameson was rightly displeased very often ; and there was no concealing that after having devoted herself and her means to the education of this niece,—bringing her out to Italy at her expense, and ministering to her enjoyment in all ways,—she had a claim to attention and obedience, even had her wishes been less reasonable than they were. But there was a want of steadiness in the management. If Gerardine looked pale, she was set on the pedestal directly and adored. And then when the colour came back, she was scolded a little —and so on. Mrs. Jameson was like a fond mother—(Geddie at least ought to love her) and Robert took the liberty so often of telling her what he took to be the truth in a very blunt fashion, and also what " he should do if he had the misfortune of having a wife like Gerardine " (which was not by any means an agreeable form of sympathy to Mrs. Jameson, though it gave Robert an occasion of showing a wonderful quantity of ferocity and savage determination) that I was half nervous with the discussion. Poor Mrs. Jameson used, then, to turn round into abrupt comments on her charming qualities, and observe how *three men out of every five would be in love with her forthwith.*

" Oh, not *you*, Browning, of course ! I am aware that under no possible circumstances, she could have been calculated to please *you*—I only speak of ordinary men " &c. &c. Received in profound silence, and with a little push against me under the table, which meant :—" *Did you ever hear any thing so absurd ? no never !* "

And it *was* rather absurd to be sure, seeing that Gerardine is just pretty and no more at most—only Mrs. Jameson's fond affection which is the root of all, is not a thing to smile at but to love her for. She feels like a mother.

Well—they left us and went to Rome, and when on our return we had them as our visitors here at Florence, a catastrophe had taken place—poor Geddie had completed her offences by falling in love with a bad artist! an unrefined gentleman!! a Roman catholic! (converted from protestantism!) a poor man!! with a red beard!!! what ever Geddie could mean by it was what Mrs. Jameson in her agony couldn't divine.

" The truth is," said she to me, " the dear child who never thought in her whole life before of love and marriage, had it all put into her head at once by the sight of your and Browning's happiness. Oh, I see it, I understand how it was."

So Robert and I were to have the blame of Geddie's falling in love, observe. I opened my eyes in considerable embarrassment. Certainly it wasn't my " pattern in the mount " which had been adopted by Gerardine, according to Mrs. J.'s own description—but I agreed to " speak to Geddie," and I did my best. Only Geddie's reading was very different, of her lord's qualities.

" So good and generous! and handsome too! and likely to be a good artist *when he tries* (draws very well already!) . . . likely *to turn back again* from being a *Roman* Catholic—left off smoking just to please aunt Nina and was very firm."

Geddie has made up her heart it is plain. When they returned to England, first I heard that everything was broken off, " Geddie being considered much too young " by her parents; and then came a letter from herself to say that all was right again, and that she was very happy. Poor little thing—I do hope she may continue so with the best reasons. I have a strong opinion of course on the right and righteousness of a woman's abiding by her own choice in marriage: but then Gerardine is, to my mind, scarcely a woman yet, and has had no experience of men and women.

. . . Quite delighted I am to hear of dearest Trippy, being

so completely settled again. Kiss her dear cheeks for me, if you please, and the lips too,—and tell her that before I am spoilt on both sides like a thoroughly spoilt apple, I hope to do it myself. Robert was vexed a little with me for " telling all about the house "*—and really all *he* thought about it was his fear and trembling lest I should be taken ill and die before we could tumble out of it fast enough. As to *reproaching me*, the idea of the possibility of such a thing never entered his mind. He is *perfect* to me—that's the only word to be used. And if I were to tell you every little thing in prose and rhyme, you could not understand the whole of what I mean when I say so, without standing by and seeing and hearing for yourselves. One of the happy results is, that I never am afraid of doing or saying what could by possibility displease him—in other words, he can't be displeased by whatever I may do or say,—so that I am at liberty to talk out aloud all the *bêtises* that come into my head. I talk as I should to you—or a little more freely, if that be possible—there is not the thinnest shadow of constraint between us. It is a great comfort to be able to think and speak together at every moment of the day, and when I remember how different it must be in most other tête à têtes of the kind between men and women, I hope I thank God for it, with some, however inadequate, gratitude. Such nonsense as is spoken in this room, to be sure! Flush opens his eyes half-way and then shuts them and goes to sleep on the dignified conviction of being able to do it a little better if he tried! I tell my dreams even, and have visions of letters in the candle according to Wilson's instructions—and now and then we take to a little sense by way of change—only it seems to me that Robert would rather hear the nonsense, of the two, because he accepts *that* as a sign of my being in spirits,—and then the thing most delightful to him is the liberty between us —the absence of embarrassment and restraint. If I wanted to offend him I should do something in the way of respect and obedience.

Now I will tell you. The other day he said to me (in

* Probably to the other sister. The hasty flight from the Via Maggio is set forth in Letters of E. B. B. i, 350. See Introduction to Letter 9.

relation to Flush or some equally weighty subject I think it was) :—

"I do wish, Ba, you wouldn't do so and so." To which I answered :

"Well, I won't do it any more," was ever a more unexceptionable answer? Yes, and it was meekly delivered too. But *he* didn't like it at all, nevertheless, and cried out quite quickly :—

"Don't say such words to me, Ba."

"Why what ought I to say then?"

"Say that you will do as you please as long as you please to do it."

So you see what a difficult position mine is. You see! My vow of obedience is only appealed to on great occasions such as finishing a mutton-chop, or cutting one more slice of bread and butter—and it's almost a pity that so much good vowing should have gone for almost nothing.

. . . It surprises us a little that the Duke of Lucca's chamberlain should choose Florence as his retiring place—he will not be popular with us Tuscans—of that he may be sure. We had a festa on last monday week, the day of S. Leopold, the name-day of our Grand-Duke, and our piazza was nearly brimming over with people. A beautiful sight really! He had gracefully solicited the civic guard to replace for that day his usual military attendance; and, as gracefully, the civic guard sent for this purpose all their *nobles*—so that the very sentinels on duty at the palace-doors were marquises or dukes. Graceful on both sides, was it not? The service extended of course to four and twenty hours, and the nobles armed themselves for the vigil with so many dozens of champagne, cakes, &c., and at twelve at night, and at nine in the morning the Duke paid them a visit. When they came to replace the military, the people who thronged the piazza shouted and clapped their hands—and that clapping of hands is a sound so full of life and mental affirmation to me, (it isn't mere animal life) that it throbs and thrills through me. Then the band played, and a hymn, in congratulation of the Grand Duke, was sung in grand chorus beneath his windows (they sent us a copy of the

poem) after which he the Duchess and their children came out into the balcony and bowed their thanks to the people. Think how we rejoiced in our situation all this time. I could sit with my feet on the fender and nod back to their Highnesses. We threw draperies of crimson silk, by the desire of the *padrone*, out of our five front windows, and only just escaped the glory of an illumination.

So you argue with Mr. Kenyon about " spheres of usefulness," Henrietta ! Depend on it there's one usefulness of the sun and another of the moon. Rolling stones which gather no moss do something else, I dare say. Some are workers in the shop and some in the field, you know—but you must know besides that we haven't given up England and never shall—though it would be folly in us, with my health, to plant ourselves so deeply there that we could not fly before the winters. To winter in England when there is the least chance of escaping, would be most absurd at any time, I do think—and now the facilities of movement are everyday becoming greater and we shall have railroads through France very soon ; and even without them, we both like travelling—it is the pleasure of pleasures to us. Oh, we shall go to Jerusalem some day—but to London first. I don't like to fasten my soul to plans which the uncertainty of the future must render uncertain—because the rending away would give too much pain, you see. I shut my eyes and open my mouth, like a child, waiting for happy providences. Meanwhile, I hold you in my heart of hearts—believe that of me—and if Robert were to meet and kiss you in the streets here—instead of Father Prout, it would be an intense joy. I think they might, some of them, in some vacation have proposed coming down the Rhine, and come a little farther. So well I am, Henrietta, if I mustn't say *too well ! !* To-day I was out, walked up and down in the broad sunshine of our piazza, and missed my parasol. We have the windows open every day ; and I believe it will be my own fault, not the atmosphere's, if I am not able to walk out a little on most days throughout the winter. Wilson has made my black merino very well—trimmed with black velvet and jet buttons—and it won't be too warm for all my boastings.

One goes out with furs *and a parasol*, quite a natural combination. As to the other house, I fear it is not let yet. Oh, we have a complement of spoons here, of cups and saucers too, only of the plainest order. The linen is the best—fine sheets and good beds. On the whole we do very well in this house, and although I behaved abominably in the whole matter I can't be sorry at our being here rather than in via Maggio where her highness of Brunswick must have suffered from every shade of blue devilrie, if she was in the least like my lowness in bodily and mental constitution.

Does Lady Bolingbroke advise? Give my love to Susan and Surtees. Give it too to Lizzie. How did George prosper on circuit? Write oftener, you and Arabel, to your own

BA.

II

Christmas in Florence and anniversaries — Knead cakes — The Hedleys — The barrier of English prices and conventions —Presents from her sisters—Men, women and marriage—Impossible candour—Marriage and income—Miss Boyle stays late—A Court Ball—R. B. on ugly women, and on the idea of debt—Mr. Kenyon's generosity—Florence beats Rome in "lions."—Arabel and the Refuge—Early Church-going—Marriages in the ascendant.

Henry is another of E. B. B.'s brothers.

For knead cakes see Letter 8.

Uncle James was the younger brother of Sir Thomas and the Rev. Richard Butler.

Arabella Graham-Clarke—Bell for short—is E. B. B.'s unmarried aunt.

Louisa, E. B. B.'s cousin, was daughter of Sir Thomas Butler, and married Sir James Carmichael.

For Lizzie Barrett, see Letter 7.

Florence,
Jan. 4, 5, 6, 1848.

MY DEAREST HENRIETTA,

You shall not wait for this letter as for the last, I have too much to say and thank you for. Thank you, thank you in the first place for your dear words on Christmas day, which the wicked post people here had the heart to keep back two days—the postmark itself certifying to its punctual arrival. Arabel's courier of a note (thank her for that, dear thing)

announced the pleasure I was to have—so of course I expected it with a full heart—and when at last it came, oh how glad it made me and how grateful to you. And how good and kind of dearest Henry to write to me again. Give him my best love—tell him that I love him dearly. Also I would say this to himself; but the present envelope will be heavily laden by the time this letter shall be thoroughly finished, so my note to him shall be for another occasion. Give Robert's love to him with mine.

Our Christmas was very quiet and happy, and we had a "plum puddingo" of the real Italiano-Inglese sort, and Wilson made us knead cakes, and Robert told me that he loved me ever so much more than on the Christmas before—so it was all very happy—only that these anniversaries always make me inclined to cry instead of laugh, and the truth is I was glad in my inmost nature when the season took itself off. Oh, how I thought of you all—how I was with you in spirit! how truly, truly, and perfectly I love you!

Well, but this is not very amusing. Let me rather think what I have to tell you. I had the kindest possible letter from uncle Hedley two days ago, with a postscript from Jane—not more kindness than I expected from uncle Hedley who has always borne himself towards me in so affectionate a spirit. It is a long letter, and he seems to like Tours much better than the Reynolds's taught us to think. They said that the Hedleys were tired of it already and yearned back to Paris. But no, says uncle Hedley, he prefers it to Paris, though the society is only indifferent. So does uncle James, who is as stout as ever, and doesn't get on with his French. Then there is a word or two about —— ——'s "*charming wife*" (underlined) who doesn't get on either with her popularity. Of husband, child, and lap-dog, she expresses a preference for the last. Poor ——! Uncle Hedley regrets B[ell]'s resolve about Leamington—just as I did without waiting to hear what you tell me. It was so obviously a good cheerful place for her to go to Tours where she had many relations, a pretty surrounding country, and such cheapness in the ways of life. You may say what you please, Henrietta—but if England expects every family to do

its duty in the particular respect of living within the circle of chalk-cliffs, why England should be good enough to let down its prices and its conventions. B[ell] is richer by just half when she is in France—observe—besides the advantage of the Hedleys. Set her up by herself at Notting Hill, and she begins by breaking her heart at the appearance of losing caste, through living in the suburbs, in a slim slice of a house, and not keeping a carriage. Louisa doesn't see what the *consequences* would be to B[ell]. *I*, for my part, wouldn't mind the least in the world, though I lived side by side with a retired grocer, (Mr. Pop—late of Holborn) and had to take the omnibus every time I came into London. But with B[ell], who *would* mind every thing, the case is different—and then you know, she is a single woman, and would never cease to " want protection " or to fancy she wanted it, to the end of her days. Now in Paris even, women do not take up such fancies ; and young and pretty women walk in the streets without any sort of chaperonage—while both men and women are more independent of conventions of every sort,—live as they please, and are none the less considered though pleasing to live in a sixth flat with one maidservant. I hear in Italy of ancient countesses and their daughters, who make their own beds and empty the " slops," and then go to court in a blaze of undeniable glory. The difference is prodigious between England and perhaps all the continental nations in this respect of social conventionality, and I am certainly of opinion that you have not the advantage, when one considers the *rationale* of things of the sort. In this difference also, still more than in actual prices, lies the question of *cheapness*. You pay for the outside crust of life, besides for the available inside goose-pie. A metaphor not appropriate to the season.

Oh, Henrietta, my dearest Arabel and all of you, what a happy year I wish you, and happy years to come after, many and many. May God bless you out of earth and Heaven, in the body and in the spirit, for time and longer than time—may He bless you better than I can imagine blessings.

Your parcels come from Rome while I write, as real Christmas gifts ! Thank you, thank you, thank you. You

are too good and kind—far, far too good and kind to me, and I open my eyes and turn from one gift to another in a sort of shameful gratitude, i.e. a mixture of gratitude and shame—not that I am ashamed of my gratitude, you will be pleased to understand. Here is this beautiful bag—which Robert declares to be the most masterly production of a lady's hand he ever had an opportunity of admiring—how beautiful and exact it is! how useful it will be in travelling, or even at home on the sofa! Inside the little internal bag (and we have admired even to the inside *button* of it) I find two worsted-needles—left there by mistake of course—I am certain you have been down on your knees on the carpet—I think I see you—looking for them—and here they are safe! given up to Wilson's uses, she being particularly in want of just such a pair of needles. Then comes Arabel's very pretty little cap-ette—*so* pretty! how I thank her dear fingers—And here again are her mittens—which I prefer to the Maltese—they are perfect I think; and the truth is that I am wearing a pair which Robert describes picturesquely as looking like a ruin of old stockings whereof he shall have kissed away all the toes. One can't get legitimately upon mittens here in Florence—at least, Wilson says she can't. They must of course be to be had, but either her energy or her Italian has hitherto failed—she gives me my choice of black worsted, or plain black silk as aforesaid. To dear little Lizzie I must write my own thanks for the pretty collar. And now what do you say for yourselves, after sending me all these things? It is too bad of you, being so much too good. Throughout the winter I am wearing constantly your slippers, now yours Henrietta which are on my feet while I write, and now Arabel's. I never wear any other shoes I assure you, except to go out. And then for you to send me other things, in this way. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

You may tell Mary Minto from me and with my love that if she is in earnest in her theory, she is not at least justified in it, and I hope her experience will solve it differently in the end. Mine has taught me that there may be men absolutely generous—who sink the very question of self, not only in great

things but in little things—which is harder perhaps. At the same time she is quite wise not to be in haste to marry—and even to give up marrying at all, *as long as* she does not find some one to hold in reverence as well as love. Marriage is not necessary to women—but there are certain conditions which are necessary to marriage—in any high and happy sense.

Think of —— —— writing to me (oh, a very kind letter) to desire to have my sincere opinion " and Mr. Browning's " about ——. We are to speak the exact truth, both of us,—and she listens for it in anxiety. Now the idea of my writing what I myself, on an impulse, have said, about—" that unpleasant man, looking as if he had been pulled through and through the deepest slough of the world—*and had liked it !* " The idea of my putting down *that*, and sending it to —— ——. How satisfactory to be sure ! Why it would be in infamous taste, if not in absolute cruelty. No, the time for truth-telling on such a subject is past. Still you are not to fancy that I dislike him so much—he is a man not of my sympathies—that is all. But I saw him only once, and really he did not seem to me unamiable—he looked good natured enough ; and as for —— ——'s happiness, I believe that at present she is quite happy. Then Robert always took his part,—classed him with one set of men, and observed that we should learn to widen our views and judge of individuals according to their class, and not according to our own tastes and characters. In which he is right of course. Only it is a hard thing to do. Also he thought well of his amiability, and good nature, being a physiognomist. Now if —— —— had married a man like Mr. Boyle for instance, I could quite have understood. He is a polished gentleman in the utmost sense of the word—and so handsome, so charming, and cultivated—without any extraordinary gifts and without being a man of letters, or, I suppose, anything approaching to it. His sister tells me he is just engaged to a very pleasing person, who has almost only expectations, while he has just nothing, probably, saving a high name and connections—the consequence being that he has set off suddenly to England to try to " get something " in the way of occupation and emolument. I like him the better

for not trading on his good looks (as really many men might) to buy the favour of an heiress. Miss Boyle, (when I observed what an absurd fuss people did make about an income, the truth being that one might live on less than was considered possible by half the civilized world) agreed at once, and remarked besides that even those who had married and *thrived* on the most uncalculating principles, generally contradicted their very own experience by talking ever so much stuff on the other side of the question for the benefit of others. She spent another evening with us alone a few nights ago, and stayed till twelve o'clock, till I was tired half to death, notwithstanding her agreeableness. Robert proposed lying in bed the whole of next day, to make up for it,—it was so very much out of our usual habits. Last night, a carriage seemed to stop at the door at about nine—

"Oh, if that should be Miss Boyle!" said I, "I really don't feel up to her to-night."

"Well—we'll let her come in, and then I will say that you have rather a headache and had just been observing that you were glad it was time to go to bed," which made me cry aloud at the very idea of such a civil and conclusive speech to a visitor coming in at the door! Fancy the hospitable effect of such a speech. Happily it was a false alarm. We had nothing worse than the sound of carriages going to the Grand Ducal Court till eleven o'clock. Wilson had a ticket and went in company with Mrs. Loftus' maid, to a post at the door of the reception-rooms. She said it was all very shabby in comparison with our English Court. The taste in dress very defective, and nobody very pretty except a Greek lady in trousers,—who, for the rest, is, Robert says, by far the prettiest woman in Florence. He is always moaning over the "hideous faces" everywhere, to which I answer that it ought to be precisely the same thing to him now, whether they are ugly or beautiful. I observe the same—the women are quite plain, really, all except the black eyes. But when everybody has black eyes, they don't count for so much. There is a general want of freshness and youthfulness in the complexions—and the figures want elasticity and grace.

Kind letters I have—heaps of letters. There's dearest Mr. Kenyon who renews his offer that we should draw on him whenever we want money. We feel it, of course, as much as if it were required, which, I thank God, it is not!—for I should have hard work to console Robert if we were even shoe-deep in pecuniary difficulty from any cause. He exaggerates the importance of being clear on all sides. We are not at all alike in that respect. Not that he cares for money the least more than I do—but the idea of " debt " is a sort of " Croque-mitaine " to him—and says " fee fa fum " in the dark. Oh, what a fuss to be sure we had last summer, because the remittance from the Rothschilds did not come on the right day—a fortnight before we wanted it. Because if something happened, and something followed, and something else didn't happen, and something else didn't follow, why we should be " embarrassed "—how dreadful to be sure! I asked him to put my sofa pillow right, and give me the second volume of Dumas' last novel. He declared that my *insouciance* was by no means laudable, that I wanted somebody to take care of me —and that I would ask for a second volume just in the same tone of voice if beginning a course of starvation, and didn't know where to get bread. I answered that the book was amusing and it might be so—but that as at present I didn't feel even hungry and believed there was every prospect of dining at three o'clock, I could *not* see any necessity for working myself into a state of frenzy. Of course the letter came next day and justified all my impertinence. There never was any one who looked round a corner with a more imaginative obliquity, when the idea of money-difficulty is suggested in any form, than Robert does. It is we who remind our creditors of their claims on us instead of its being the other way. We send down to our hostess on the very morning, that she may come to have the next two months rent prepared. The same with everything.

. . . Think of Robert's seeing in Galignani's newspaper (the Paris paper, extracting from the Daily News) a letter from Rome which says graciously that " Rome is less happy than Florence in possessing *only* Mrs. Trollope and Lady Charlotte

Bury, whereas Florence has Mr. Grattan, Mr. Lever, and Robert Browning with his gifted wife."

We have been laughing at this a little at coffee-time, and I felt impelled to tell you. We suspect Father Prout of being the expounder of the supreme happiness of Florence.

. . . And keep Arabel from going among such of the poor as may have infectious complaints. Dear darling Arabel—neither she nor you were ever in any " scrape " with me, I do assure you : but Robert had me by the head and you by the heels, and I was being pulled in two. Do take care of yourself, and give up while the winter lasts the early Church going, which never did your body good whatever it might do for your soul ! How is my very dear Trippy ? My love and a great double-kiss, and Robert's and my affectionate wishes for the years to come and follow. Mind you tell her that. Marriages are in the ascendant. I have heard of another coming on—but can't tell you yet. Don't try to guess. Depend on it that all single people are being swept out of the world ! so look to yourselves in Wimpole Street.

May God bless you all. Your own attached

BA.

12

Birthday good wishes, shared by R. B.—Post Office delay—A fool's letter—A torchlight procession for the Grand Duke—Health, even walks—Wilson takes to Italy—England an uncertainty—Arabel's " mesmeric " pull—Trippy's spectacles—Marriage to a bunch of goose feathers—Jamaica troubles—How little money is necessary to happy living—Plan for taking unfurnished rooms, set aside—No room for R. B. to write—He will not go into society—Wrong for them not to have married—Ever closer union.

March 4th was Henrietta's birthday.

The illumination of the city is more briefly described to Miss Mitford, Letters i, 357.

The other sisters had High Church leanings, while Elizabeth admittedly had no sympathy with Tractarianism ; Arabel in particular, who united fervent religion with practical work in the poorer districts at Ragged School and Refuge, would have been utterly shocked by the freedom of discussion

among the Brownings' friends. But they had not, like Elizabeth, absorbed the spiritual theories of Swedenborg, to which "spiritualistic" phenomena seemed an obvious corollary. Thus, while Elizabeth took these as the natural outcome of her presuppositions, the others' early curiosity soon recoiled. It did not go much beyond the interest in mesmerism here alluded to.

Florence,
Feb. 21, *March* 2–4, 1848.

MY EVER DEAREST HENRIETTA,

I hope you will receive this on a day which will bring me more and tenderer thoughts of you than usual. May God bless you, my dearly loved sister. If ever it comes into your head, that, through absence, or other affections, I love you, by one heart's beat, less, you do me a wrong, which, upon consideration, I am confident, you cannot do me for a moment. If there is any difference in my love for you, it is through increase, and not diminution. Oh, surely I love you better than ever. I see you in my dreams, all of you. I think of you and talk of you continually. If I had no one to talk to I should talk to myself, certainly: but Robert is always glad to hear me. Otherwise I should love *him* less. Dear dearest Henrietta, may this year bring you baskets-full of blessings! I wish for you, I pray for you, I love you, all you can wish and pray for yourself, and far more than you ever loved yourself. May God be best of all to you, and surpass the prayers and wishes, even as He out-loves the love. Now what is there more to say?

Your letter came open as usual, after having been detained *nine days* at the post office! After the proper burst of rage, we began seriously to ponder whether your handwriting was not obscurer than usual in the address. Henrietta, you must write the directions as clearly as possible, and not in a running hand. Our post office people have no superfluous learning, and don't read very currently. I had been waiting and groaning for letters, letters—and it was too bad to have one's letter waiting for one, in Florence itself. Welcome at last, three times over, it was. And have I written, I wonder, since my darling Arabel? I thank you both, dearest Things. . . .

Such a terror I had the other day. Robert came back from the post with a great thick letter for me, for which he had paid half a crown—with black edge an inch deep, and a black seal, sealed, as struck me in a moment, with Papa's well known griffin seal! The writing was not his, I saw—but the seal, and the blackness! I made an exclamation, and, Robert says, grew as white as a sheet in a moment. He cried out: "Don't open it, Ba, I conjure you"—and snatching it from my hand, opened and read—began to read aloud how somebody who invoked—"Madam," was constructing a book for the benefit of the rising generation, and wanted the use of certain poems, and enclosed a heap of criticisms, cut out of newspapers, on his own former works, to prove that he by no means was nobody—desiring me to return directly the said valuable documents, from Italy to England. So far Robert read, broke off in the middle of the letter, and dashed the whole into the fire!

"Inconsiderate fools, men are, to be sure!"

As for me, I was out of breath, as you may suppose, at being so summarily avenged. The poor man will have to wait for his "documents." I lay still on the sofa, recovering slowly from my fright. Oh, it was such terror! I thought, you see, vague thoughts about Jamaica. Before the calm came back I was positively bursting out into tears again and again.

We have had an illumination throughout the city—and you in England can't guess how beautiful a Florentine illumination is! The Pitti palace opposite to us was drawn out in fire! and so with all the noblest buildings, palaces and churches—while the people pour along the streets in that quaint effusion of joy and sympathy, so touching to the stranger. Well—we finished our sandwiches (think of taking sandwiches at that time of night) and, thoroughly tired for my part, I went to my room to undress! Hair in full curling and combing, all over my shoulders, when up comes a great shout of a multitude, and nearer and nearer into the piazza.

"Ba, Ba," says Robert at the door, "come this moment out here—I want you to see something."

What in the world is the matter now, thought I—I went

to the window—and there, with vehement bursts of acclamation, was the Grand Duke's carriage in the midst of a " milky way " of waxen torchlights. You would have thought that all the stars out of Heaven had fallen into the piazza. Good Grand Duke ! I clapped my hands with all my heart at him. Such an excellent constitution he has given to Tuscany, with every religious distinction abolished at one sweep ; and this by his free will and after long reflection. Nights after nights he has spent, they say, without sleep, in painful thought—and his face expresses it. I like him, and I like his face. Well—you see, at the close of a festa-day, he thought he would go privately to the opera, for repose and refreshment—in order to which, he *walked there*, and only would have his carriage to return in. At the opera, however, he was recognised by somebody—and not a note more of music was listened to, through the vehement shouting—while at the door the people provided with torches, met him and carried him home to the Pitti in a triumph. The poor Duke, quite taken by surprise and overcome, wept, we hear, like a child. Well done people—wasn't it ? In the illumination we set two wax candles at each of our five windows, which ruined us " gloriously." Think of that !

You want to know whether I go out now. I have gone out twice lately—that is I have walked up and down in the sunshine opposite our door ! Much oftener I have the window open, and enjoy the sweet spring air. Very well I am. Wilson said, the other day, she never in her life saw me looking so well, and I am what I look. Wilson herself is blooming in health and spirits. She is getting naturalized—talks Italian and understands it, with a little licence in the grammar. She is contented enough with Florence. I reproach her sometimes with her long sighs at Pisa, and very short conclusions, respecting the Italians being so much " less *pleasant* to *do with* " than the French—but she was ill at Pisa, and illness of course puts one out of spirits.

As to dear England, I dare not say a word—we must wait and see. Tell my dear dearest Arabel, that if she will come to me in a current of mesmeric influence, I shall be sure to be

susceptible—so encourage her in it. Oh, how I do long—long—long—to see your beloved faces. Tell my dearest Trippy, that if she don't write to *me*, I will write to *her* at any rate—so that our intercourse shan't be dependent on spectacles. Still, I think, somehow that if I were in London, I could dig up a pair of spectacles somewhere, north, south, east or west. Why not ask Papa to get a pair ? he has only to select the strongest magnifying glasses you know, and that anybody can do.

Now, Henrietta, you were perfectly wrong about Miss ——'s marriage being " my secret." I never called *that* any sort of a secret at all. It came to me in the usual course of common news. You think it will " steady her." I doubt whether a bunch of goose feathers can be expected to steady anybody. A real attachment to a man of her own order would steady her of course : but depend upon it, that when a woman of decided tastes, accepts a husband with whom she cannot sympathize, she assumes the most dangerous position accessible to any woman in the world. My secret, I can't tell yet, because it was committed to me in strict confidence. It will make Arabel open her two eyes, and one in her forehead besides—if there should be the seed of an eye anywhere thereabouts. She will be more interested in it than you, Henrietta. There, now, you will set about guessing. After May it will be known, I think.

So poor Jamaica is really done for this time ! But enough will float, I dare say. I can't be uneasy about such things ; only that I should like my poor beloved, ever beloved Papa to have nothing to vex him on a subject where he squanders so much thought and care. As to money, I never knew before (with all my possessions !) how little is necessary to happy living, just now that we have no carriage, and no travelling expenses. And this, observe, without the least niggardliness or self-denial in anything. You would be surprised, I am sure, if you saw how comfortably we live. Now, if I had said in Wimpole Street that we might live *so*, who would not have laughed me to scorn, and set it down to sheer ignorance ? I don't mean to say that we spend in a like proportion, taking the whole year together : but then it is through having a

carriage, and travelling, and things of that sort. There is no reason, you know, why we should not buy certain advantages, when we have the means. Neither of us has the fancy of laying up money, for the money's sake. If we liked to take unfurnished rooms in Florence, we might, for ten pounds a year, get a beautiful apartment in the best situation, and furniture cheap in proportion—which would make an immense difference, of course, but we are not going to do that—so you needn't look so frightened.

Robert says: "But Ba, you *must* let me write to them this time."

But I say: "No, there's no room—you must wait for another letter."

It is entirely my fault that you have not heard from him weeks ago. I write too much, and then there's no room—and he is "sure that you will think it unkind of him," and I am sure that you can't think anything unkind possible to him, or else you would not believe in me.

There have been grand English private-theatricals here in Florence at Mr. Lever's house, (the famous Irish Lever) and Miss Boyle, being a performer, begged Robert to go for one night.

"Just for two hours—surely Mrs. Browning would take her part, and beg him to go for once."

Well, I begged, scolded, coaxed, did all in vain.

"If he did it once, he would be made to do it again—it was against his rules—he was far happier at home with me."

Nothing could persuade him to leave me, in fine. Quite an extravagance I know—but what is one to say or feel, in the face of such extravagance. He says to me sometimes—

"Now, Ba, wouldn't it have been *wrong* if we two had not married?" And really we seem in some mysterious way to get closer and closer every new four and twenty hours.

I prophesy that Surtees will one day prove a great success. May God bless you. I love and pray for you continually—you and all of you. Love to you all, dear things.

Your own attached

BA.

13

Illness and recovery—Daily drives—Revolutions everywhere—Illuminations in Florence—Action in France—Panic among foreigners ; not justified in Florence, though Wilson distrusts the civic guard.

The Hedleys had considerable investments in French railways. See Introduction to Letter 1.

Florence,
March 7—April 1, 1848.

My ever dearest Henrietta,

I have been ill again, and there's the truth, and in bed for a week. . . . Dr. Harding bids me trust more to the open air than to other means ; and as soon as ever I could bear it I was sent out in the carriage. We drove to our old paradise—the Cascine, and saw the elms as green as ever they mean to be, and the grass like emeralds, and the pheasants all alive and flying. As every day we are to go out by especial command, Robert has taken a carriage for the month—a britska, easy and nice looking, with two horses and a coachman. . . . .

The evil is passed, through God's mercy,—thrown far behind. God's goodness should be recognised in these things, and I beseech of you, my dear dearest sisters to help me to recognise it in thanks to Him. . . . How can I find words to tell you of all the dear and untiring tenderness of my husband. Instead of loving me less, it is surely more and more that he loves me. . . . .

Now I am back in my old place, pouring out the coffee, and as impertinent as usual—and when we go on our drives, we talk and laugh and enjoy the world as much as if it were not turned topsy turvy. What an extraordinary state of the times, to be sure ! Every morning as Robert goes to the post and to look at the newspapers, I say " Bring me back news of a revolution ! " And generally he brings me back news of *two !* Since the creation there never was such a succession of moral earthquakes. Here in Florence the heart of the people boils—but there is perfect tranquillity, as far as one can see,—and it would be quite wrong and ungrateful if our Grand Duke

suffered, after his free concessions. The accounts from Lombardy are awful (I mean, of the butchery performed in Milan by the Austrian troops, in their blind fury—), but glorious in results for the unarmed and triumphant people. Two or three days ago, there was a grand Florentine illumination,—the Grand Duke throwing out his Pitti palace in fire upon the sky,—(and he a Grand Duke of Austria !) at the news from Lombardy of the Austrian expulsion. The streets were thronged with people, and the utmost harmony pervaded the whole city. The night before there was a loud shouting in our piazza—a great crowd had seized upon the arms of Austria, suspended on the house of the ambassador, and burnt them with a shriek of curses under the palace windows ! then gave a " Viva Leopoldo secondo," and dispersed peacefully. I was not in the least frightened, nor had reason for being so.

As to my dear heroic French, they justify my faithful affection : and yet by no means do I approve of everything done or attempted just now in that wonderful Paris of mine where men see *half-truths*—so high and pure that they are not seen at all by men in general—but still *half-truths*, and as such dangerous or impossible to render into practice. Whatever, for instance, touches upon property is a wrong, and whatever tends to the production of social equality is absurd and iniquitous, and oppressive in its ultimate ends. Every man should have the right of climbing—but to say that every man should equally climb, (because the right is equal,) is a wrong against the strong and industrious ; and there has been wrong enough in God's world as He knows, without introducing a new kind of wrong. Confiscating the royal property, seemed to me, too, unhappy and unworthy : and why destroy titles ? why not retain an inexpensive mode of recognising public services—so much better than any money way, and as good as the inch of coloured ribbon in the button hole ? *Hereditary* distinction, is a different question. Let the notion of privileged orders perish, as it ought. Robert and I agree nearly on all these points, but here and there we have plenty of room for battles.

Many of the English are flying from Florence—tranquil as

Florence is, and absurd as all fear is. Pray, pray, never be afraid for us whatever you may read in the papers or listen to elsewhere. The air just now is " full of noises, that give affright and hurt not." Suppose the *worst* and most improbable, that the Austrians marched straight on us ! Well, *we* are not going to fight, you may be certain. We shall be safe as you are. In the nearly impossible case of any bombardment, we shall rush away, be certain. The panic in France and Italy is absurd. If people will but stay quietly where they are, the storm will pass and the sun come out and justify them. Yet while I write I am a little uneasy about the dear Hedleys. I am afraid that their courage will not hold up to the end, and that dear uncle Hedley may, *at a sacrifice*, receive his property from the Gaul. . . . . All will end well in France, be sure, to those who wait for the morning. Poor B[ell] will be dreadfully uneasy about her shares in the railways, I dare say. Yet she need not. All is sure to end well. This is just the time for brave men to make their fortunes.

I write on the 1st of April. The weather is exquisite, and we have had no fire since the 15th. I have been out seven times in the carriage, and to-day was scarcely tired. Thank God for me, whenever you pray, thinking of me. Of course our plans float uncertainly still. We long for you out loud, because two empty seats in the carriage suggest you two—not to mention other times of longing. Do write and tell me of all. Mention Papa's cough particularly. What does he say of these revolutions ? Did George prosper on circuit ? Mention all of them. Write, write, write. Wilson is not much afraid, but wishes they would not send away the soldiery, having a disparaging opinion of the civic guard as a protective force. Dearest Henrietta I love you. I love you both and all.

I am your very own

Ba.

14

Republican ideals and French shortcomings—England and special constables—R. B. outwardly more "aristocratic" than herself—Perfection in a husband does not exclude sisterly longings.

Ledru Rollin, leader of the Red Republicans in 1848, was an unsuccessful candidate for the Presidency. His rising against Louis Napoleon's Government in June, 1849, also failed, and he fled for refuge to England.

The special constables in England were enrolled in the fear of Chartist disturbances.

Florence,
April 22, 1848.

My ever dearest Henrietta,

I have your letter, and Arabel's note, and thank you both as for the best gifts possible. . . . I fear the Hedleys will suffer from *our republic* which by no means satisfies me, for one, in its ways of going on. Why surely Arabel must have forgotten me if she fancies that I have gone deeper into a certain class of opinions since my marriage.—I don't embrace the French system altogether. In France there is every noble aspiration, there are men of splendid talents and virtues—but the ideas go up like rockets, and, in the midst of our acclamation and admiration, drop down in ashes. Little is consequent and consistent, and still less practically possible. Legislation, for the sake of one class, (and that class the most unintelligent and uncultivated) must be bad; and government controlled by mobs and sticks must be unwise. If they went on in their present way of governing, there would be an end of—not only trade and peace, but art and literature—and for my part, I would rather live on bread and water than see such a state of things. My idea of a republic is for every born man in it to have room for his faculties—which is perfectly different from swamping individuality in a mob. Ledru Rollin is more a tyrant, (as far as he dares) than ever was Louis Philippe, so that I fear there will be a reaction, and an end, of our republic. Oh, I fear. As to England, I congratulate you, special constables and all, if it is a subject of congratulation. You think yourselves so much better off than France was under her last King, and in that you deceive yourselves wonderfully. There

were anomalies in France, injudicious proceedings—such as the seizure of newspapers occasionally, when they nearly always talked naked treason! You ought to have read how the newspapers talked to France—what violent language, what open insults to the King. Injudiciously, therefore, they were occasionally seized, provoking people to complain of sins against freedom of the press: who were right to complain! but *you* are not right in imagining that free discussion was denied to them, and granted exclusively to you. Then, the French wanted better representation in parliament, just as you do. So tell Arabel *that*, with my best love, and don't all of you be too triumphant because your "specials" have come home "with their shields" instead of "upon them." I would rather have dear England as she is than as France is, I do confess—the "price of blood" has been too heavy there. Robert and I think just alike on most points—but if one of us goes further than the other, I conscientiously believe it is I—*Don't say that I say so, though!* Sometimes, in joke, I call him an aristocrat—I cry out "*à bas les aristocrats*"—because he really cares a good deal about external things—perhaps it is an artist's sense of grace that he has, only that I choose to make fun of it. For instance about houses, and furniture, and horses and carriages, he is far more particular than I ever was or can be. Then I laugh—and then he says it is for my sake. So it may be, and is, ungrateful that I am—only that he certainly looks to the things minutely,—he has a feeling about them, not altogether Spartan.

Ah, and if you think that because Robert is perfect to me, I never wish for you, dearest things, you are wrong, wrong, wrong! I do wish, I do long for you. It is a great drawback not always to be with you. But we must contrive the means of seeing you and being with you more often—trust to us. . . . Write quickly and tell me minutely of every thing. This letter of mine goes sooner than usual and is shorter—not the least because writing hurts me. Give my love to Surtees always. My words are tumbling head over heels. I have to write so fast for Robert's waiting. Loves to all—to all.

Your own BA.

15

Anxiety for lack of letters—Winter in England impossible—Mr. Kenyon's approval—Furnishing, sofas versus drawers—Punch and Judy as in London—No festa ; the money goes to the army in Lombardy—Austria doomed in spite of Mr. Fowke—The French republic in difficulties—Royal exiles—Hot weather occupations ; poem in Blackwood—Legible addresses—Home visitors hoped for—Fashions.

Mrs. Browning at this juncture writes curiously little to her sister about the Lombard War. The course of the war was still apparently favourable. " Casa Guidi Windows " was only in the writing ; she had not yet realised the hollowness of Florentine protestations, whereof she writes the following February ; the fatal day of Custoza was six weeks off. Meanwhile she was probably unaware of the weak tactics of Charles Albert, which allowed the Austrian army to reach the security of the Quadrilateral, while its soldierly *moral* remained unaffected by the patriotic enthusiasm in their own country, which had flared up into revolution in Hungary and Bohemia. It looks as though the sisters at home were more responsive to nearer events in France ; it was enough to assure them that life at Florence was simple, and travel, away from Lombardy, perfectly safe.

Mr. Fowke was Gustavus Woolaston, second son of Sir Frederick Gustavus Fowke, Bar., born 9th April, 1818, died 14th March, 1842—a friend of her brothers. He was in the Austrian Cavalry. In form and limbs and stature he was simply magnificent. He had a beautiful voice—and altogether was a most agreeable, charming man. (S.A.)

E. B. B.'s poem in *Blackwood*, also mentioned in Letters 16 and 17, was " A Meditation in Tuscany."

Florence,
June 24, 1848.

My ever dearest Henrietta,

Why do you leave me to be so uneasy, if really it can be that all this time you have not written ? Robert suggests again and again that your letter has been lost. It is possible, therefore—that you have written. If not,—now judge for yourselves if it is kind to let me remain seven weeks without a word except those two strips of paper. The last said that you

would both write next day—and a fortnight passes in silence. Sometimes I blame the post, sometimes you—yet on the latter point, your usual goodness and consideration to me arise up like ghosts predicting that something is wrong. Oh, do, do, be more regular and frequent in writing to me. I can't bear these silences—you must know that I can't with any patience. Can it be possible that you are angry with us for some imaginable cause? for staying at Florence? No, it is not at all possible. You would take us to be mad, for instance, if we had returned to England, when you know that I could not pass the winter there, except as a prisoner and invalid. I can't understand how, in the face of all experience, you can wish me to be a resident in England. Used I not to say and did you not always agree, that never, if I could help it, I would winter in England?

Now, my dearest beloved sisters, you will be sensible and consider these things and judge and discern how we have acted for the best, and how my heart and affection for you, has acted in them, as well as my brain and judgment of circumstances. Mr. Kenyon writes to applaud to the echo everything we have done, as most prudent, most wise. I wish—I wish—I could see your dear faces satisfied—and " agreeable " as people say, when they themselves are particularly disagreeable.

We are getting on slowly in the furnishing department. I reproach Robert, you know, with a drawer-plague—he was so fond of raining down drawers upon us—but when we came to compare my sofa-plague, and see which evil grew fastest—it was found the other day that we had eight sofas, and only six chests of drawers. So now I have nothing to say. It's a comfort to have sofas everywhere—three spring ones in the drawing room, a little spring one in the book room—a large spring one in my bedroom—and others of an ordinary fashion sprinkled here and there. Three spring arm chairs to boot. So if you sit down anywhere, you drop into soft air. Not a curtain up yet though, nor a bell rope. Robert wants a ducal bed for my room—all gilding and carving—we shall see. Not a tree or a flower on the terrace, because he wants to put off that till the last—but I tease him capitally about them. Summer

going by, and no vines planted. I want festoons of vines and roses everywhere. We have been extravagant enough to place a glass above the drawing room fire place—not very large, but with the most beautiful carved gilt frame I ever saw in my life. Two cupids hold lights at the lower part. It belonged to the French Chargé d'affaires—from whom we have bought many other things. For our drawing room chairs—pure antique—Gothic, rather, black, carved wood. . . .

While I write there's a Punch talking under the windows, just as he would talk in Wimpole Street. You know, or may not know, Punch is Neapolitan by extraction—but I forget that, and unawares fancy myself in London. To-day is the great Florentine day of St. John—only no fire-works this year, on account of the war. Very sensibly the people have sent the money to the army in Lombardy. Austria goes out slowly, but never will recover her position in Italy, let Mr. Fowke fight ever so. This is the opinion of persons of various politics.

In the meanwhile I groan in the spirit for France. The republic seems inextricably involved with the communists; and no better issue appears than to return to the Kingship—whether the Count of Paris or Prince Napoleon or the Duc de Bordeaux, who shall say. The Duc de Bordeaux's sister the Princess of Parma is in a villa close to Florence, received as a fugitive and guest of our Grand Duke. A hard case indeed. She came alone, with two English servants, a man and his wife, on the point of her confinement, and just waits till the event is over. The Grand Duke goes to see her twice a day, but otherwise she receives no visitors whatever. Afterwards she talks of England.

Till quite the evening, nobody can stir out now, on foot or in carriage—not women, at least. Thermometer in the shade above eighty. In our rooms we keep it at seventy-one or two, by shutting the green blinds, the windows and the shutters—all three quite close. It was long before I could be persuaded to shut the windows as in the winter. It seemed too hard to shut out the sweet external air. But Robert has ground it into my mind at last, that it's the only thing to do—and

experience makes the thing evident. In the mornings and the evenings, and all the night through, we take our revenge by opening every thing wide. At about eight in the evening we go out to walk, and loiter about and sit in the Loggia until past nine. The sunsets on the bridges are divine. Tell me what you think of my poem in Blackwood. It is longer than the Prometheus. What a rambling scrambling letter this is, to be sure.

Now, whenever you write, you will mention the Hedleys of course, and everybody else who interests me. Oh, that I had a letter! Henrietta—write the *Browning* very distinctly, I entreat you—for these people at the post office have to spell every word they read, and are by no means happy in their guesses. Mr. Kenyon talks of coming to Florence this year. Why won't George give us his vacation? It would be kind, and it would make me very happy. Surely he might do it. He would be received with four open arms. . . . I am very well and looking well—and find myself *running* unawares. Do you wear mantillas in civilized lands, or what? great bonnets or small? Tell me if there's any thing extraordinary in the way of shoe-ties. Write I do entreat you. Love to all.

Your ever attached BA.

16

Off to Fano—Her father's portrait—The Blackwood poem—Etiquette and a baby princess—Description of a lady—France, Italy, Clifton and the Hedleys—An Irish magistracy undesirable.

For " down the Rhine," see Letter 10.

Florence, Palazzo Guidi,
July 17, 1848 (*Monday*).

MY DEAREST HENRIETTA,

So the little notes always go to Arabel! Well, here's a little one to keep the peace and prove that it isn't quite so. I write at noon on monday—and at seven we are off to Fano on the Adriatic—look out for it on the map. We have taken the coupé of the diligence to Arezzo, shall travel all night for the coolness and the moon lightness and the delightfulness, (I have persuaded Robert into the night-work, because

really the sun is past bearing) arrive at Arezzo at five in the morning, go to bed and take a complete rest, and continue our journey—we don't exactly know how (by the diligence if possible) through Urbino to Fano, along the great Apennine Road which is said to be magnificent. We mean to try to get into some sort of nest at Fano. The mountain air and sea air will do us infinite good. We leave our rooms under the care of the porter—and shall come back sooner or later just as we care to stay or return. Very vexed I am to go without another letter from you. Such niggardly people as you are about letters, never were, I think. . . .

What makes me write this scrap of note, is to correct something said by me in my last letter. I said: "*Don't send my pictures*"—by which I mean anything except Papa's picture—but *Papa's* I *particularly* want, and shall hang it up in my bedroom, opposite the bed. Let it be carefully packed and sent.

My poem isn't a "Dream of Tuscany," if you please; but a "Meditation in Tuscany." It was begun in this very palazzo Guidi last autumn, and finished in the winter. I shall do something better some day.

Wilson went to see a friend of hers yesterday at the Princess of Parma's villa, when the little princess, about two years old, burst away from a troop of ladies, and rushed into Wilson's arms to her infinite discomfiture—clasped her knees, and seized hold of her parasol. The Duc de Bordeaux's little niece, you remember—and, poor child, it hadn't learnt its unnatural lesson of majesty. The ladies in waiting laughed.

. . . . Think of E—— C——. The description of her is not very charming—but when a woman grows fat and red to that extremity, and *wears her hair in bandeaux*, there must be an end of her, I should think. No, it's impertinence of me to write such things—and dear E. is a good warm-hearted creature whom I heartily wish all good to. She never appears to advantage in London, observe—even with a husband who plays dumbie and lets her talk.

Is it possible that the Hedleys would live at such a place as Clifton! Why not wait till France settles, which it will—

and I fear into a bed of fleurs de lis—(*I despair of the republic*, though Robert does not quite,) if they won't come to Florence where they would be absolutely safe and undisturbed. . . It is a great pity that the Hedleys don't come here till France is ready for them—and they might steam it down the Rhine without an effort, even were Marseilles not open, which really it is. They never, never will like Clifton. . . . My much loved Henrietta, how you could ever dream of setting up your husband as a stipendiary magistrate in Ireland to be shot at, I can't understand. May God bless and prosper you. . . . I long to hear of you—courage! George, too—how anxious I am for him dear fellow. Tell me everything. Oh, that lost letter! Everything was in it. God bless you all as I love you, and beyond. Speak of Papa always.

Your own attached

BA.

17

A masquerade visit to Herefordshire—Furnishing of Casa Guidi—Weather; letter-writing—Father Prout again; his "sublime confidence"—A latent antipathy of nature—Revival of "A Blot on the Scutcheon"—Wilson's first engagement—Position of a Ducal Guard—English wives and Italian husbands—Jealousy in practice—Alessandro's self-sufficiency—His opinion of R. B. as a husband—Sharpe's Magazine and Mrs. Jameson; Dislike of writing for magazines—Enquiry after English fashions—Assassination of Rossi—Family messages—Father Prout's handkerchiefs—Possible visitors.

Henrietta and her brother Alfred had gone down into Herefordshire to play a trick on their old friends, the Peytons, whose home, The Bartons, adjoining the Barretts' former home of Hope End. They timed their arrival for dusk. Henrietta disguised herself with a thick veil; Alfred pretended a clandestine marriage, and craved the well-known hospitality of The Bartons for himself and a mysterious wife. Hence the "embarrassment" and the "protestations"; while Reynolds Peyton, the eldest son, true to expectation, unhesitatingly exclaimed: "Whether married or single, a Moulton-Barrett shall be welcome." When the lights came and the veil was removed, the amusement may be imagined.

Towards the end of 1848 Italy suffered a fresh convulsion. At Rome Rossi, a Moderate, was trying to preserve the State, Temporal Power and all, by drastic reforms. Against him stood alike the nationalists, the party of United Italy and war with Austria; the democrats, whose excesses he cut short; and the clericals, who detested enlightenment and reform. On November 15th Rossi was foully assassinated by revolutionaries among the defeated volunteers who had returned from the Lombard campaign. The result was the end of Pio Nono's liberalism, his flight from Rome to be King Bomba's guest at Gaeta, and the brief rise of Mazzini's ideal republic at Rome.

Florence,
Nov. 19, 1848.

My ever dearest Henrietta,

I hope you will not have expected this letter too long. I have received Arabel's most welcome one with your little note inside, and I thank her, darling thing, and thank you for quantities of pleasure and satisfaction—though I am not quite at ease, I do confess, as to the consequences of your Herefordshire descent. My dearest Henrietta, nothing more insane was ever committed by the sane—and how you could venture to pay all those visits and dare all that publicity, makes my head turn to think of it. If your secret is kept, the stars will be more praiseworthy than you. For the rest Alfred managed it admirably at the Bartons. I did laugh heartily at dear kind Mrs. Peyton's embarrassment, and Reynolds' prompt good nature, and Tom's natural protestations, and the dignified silence with which you waited for the drawing up of the curtain and coming in of candles. Nothing could be better arranged or more amusing; and then, I dare say, the briefness of the time in which you had to do so much helped your spirits and energies, and made it more enjoyable.

We have been in the greatest fuss lately about curtains, and when I tell you that they are not yet put up, you may appreciate the slowness of our Italians. . . . The bed rooms are to have the curtains altogether of white muslin—in rather a large pattern—two to each window—very full. And the bed in my room is hung with the same. You will wonder at me

for having a white bed after all—but the thick materials are out of the question in Italy. White muslin is better than white dimity, which used to be my favourite aversion in England, you know. We bought for my bed-room a beautiful chest of drawers, walnut-wood inlaid with ivory—very beautiful. Robert bought the other day a companion-chest, infinitely more beautiful—in fact far too good for my bedroom—ebony and ivory inlaid, with the curiosest gilt handles—Tritons holding masks. It is altogether beautiful and striking. So that my room will be something splendid when finished ! . . .

Oh, how afraid I am lest you should have been expecting a letter too long for your comfort ! I remember with deep remorse that it is a month since I wrote last. Do forgive me, and set down that it shall not be so again. There were uncertainties which kept me from writing. I put it off from day to day, thinking of you and loving you, believe me, every day without fail !

And now, will you all believe that Father Prout has spent *every evening here except one*, since I wrote last ! Oh, it's a settled thing—he is our man of the mountain, whom Sinbad carried on his back, and we think it a decided gain whenever we can get tea over before he comes and fixes himself at his smoking post for three hours at least. As a matter of course the wine is rung for instantly, with an apparatus for spitting ! —and gradually and after passing through various transitional states of phrenzied impatience, we are becoming resigned, and what is called " *acclimated*." Poor Robert has been sorely tried between his good nature and detestation of the whole proceeding ; and then, every now and then, he falls into a mood of indulgence, and we agree that when a man throws himself on you with such a " sublime confidence " as Robert says, and appeal to sympathy, it is impossible to get up a spirit of repulse strong enough to be effectual ! At first you know, he was going to Rome in two or three days—that made us endure for a time—but presently he told us calmly that :

" Florence agreed with him better than Rome did, that he liked the place, liked the beef, liked the bread and especially liked his Attic evenings with Browning and Ba ! "

He should be forced to go to Rome on ecclesiastical business —more was the pity—but should come back again at the quickest! This morning Robert met him out walking, and ventured to ask "if he had quite given up Rome."

"No, he should have to go next week, and stay a fortnight" —"and then," said he, "I shall return to Florence for two months, and spend every evening with Ba!"

"Sublime confidence," observed Robert to me, in repeating this. Very sublime indeed! Only one requires some sublimity of another sort, oneself, to be able to bear it with meekness: because you see all our evenings, so happy and tranquil, are absolutely done for, ground to powder, smoked to ashes; and then, nobody is equally inclined every evening for three hours to talk as Robert is forced to do—to make conversation—and this for a person who however full of talent and reading, is by no means near to him on the ground of sympathies of any sort even literary. Never were two clever men more unlike—ways of thinking, ways of feeling, ways of imagining, all most unlike. As for me, I don't take much trouble. I lie on the sofa, and listen, and let myself be called "Ba!" (for I assure you it comes to that,) without much minding: and when he goes away, there's a general burst of indignation and throwing open of doors to get rid of smoke and malice. After all there are things in the man which one can't help liking. I firmly believe that he is kind-hearted, in spite of his cynicism brought up on every occasion. I believe him to be kind-hearted and feeling—and then, his agreeableness when he pleases, and cleverness in every way, are quite undeniable—while as to principles, it always appears to me that he has a hold by some essential points of Christianity. He will talk with plain disgust of this and that "blasphemous rascal" even while he praises somebody else for calling "life a jest"—which as Robert rightly observed to me afterwards, was "a commonplace of atheism."* What is the unpleasant

* A pagan, kissing, for a step of Pan,
The wild-goat's hoof-print on the loamy down,
Exceeds our modern thinker who turns back
The strata—granite, limestone, coal, and clay—
Concluding coldly with, "Here's law! Where's God?"
—Aurora Leigh.

part of it, is the defect in delicacy, conventional or otherwise—and of course it is this which prevents him from perceiving at a glance that the constancy of his evening visits is an excess—to say the least of it. Still, one likes the human nature of the man.

We were surprised the other day by an application from Mr. Phelps, the manager of Astley's, for the author's permission to bring out straightway a revival of the " Blot on the Scutcheon," which was acted only for a few nights at Covent Garden. Phelps knew all the circumstances at the time, and understands, as any one may, the dramatic capabilities of the tragedy. I have always said that for pathos and exquisite tragic beauty, it is the first of Robert's plays. Of course he could only give his assent, stipulating for the purity of the text. This is a great compliment this taking a printed work, and involves no mixing up of the author with theatrical nuisances—he has nothing whatever to do in the matter except as far as the pecuniary proceeds of the new copyright act make an established claim, Mr. Phelps being forced to pay so much tax to the author, every night it runs. The new edition is coming out soon, and was advertised in the last Edinburgh Review we hear.

Now I am allowed to commit to you what has hitherto been a great secret, because Wilson was unwilling to make her mother uncomfortable without a fixed necessity and I was bound to say nothing. Do you remember how a year or more ago, I said some jesting words about her being sure to marry one of the Grand Duke's body Guards. They are all highly respectable and moral men, and some six feet high, which are the necessary conditions of their status, and they are employed exclusively in the palace and the Grand Duke's personal exigencies. Well, most pure jest I spoke in that letter, not being aware at the moment even that Wilson knew one of them except by sight and at beat of drum—and, in jest besides, I repeated to her with a smile what I had written. To my astonishment she looked a little confused, and blushed and laughed, and " wondered what I should think if my joke were to turn out a true thing." And then it all came out that

" Mr. Righi, of the Ducal Guard, had been introduced to her by such a friend, and had paid her such and such attentions and that although she had refused to enter into an engagement yet, she thought so highly of him, considered him so superior and excellent, it had become a question with her &c. &c."

At first, I confess to having been confounded and not a little sorry. All the objections struck me with great force—the Italian husband—the difference in religion, chiefly. I said what I could, and urged her to enter on no engagement until she had absolutely made up her mind, and not to make up her mind until she had better opportunities of knowing the man,—representing the obvious disadvantage of her imperfect acquaintance with the language and customs of the country. Oh, she saw and admitted everything—especially the obstacle of the point of religion—and she would take time she said—and she really did take time. Some six months intervened between the declaration and the engagement. But then, she was resolved. He promised her the full and free exercise of her religion—she never should be interfered with on any point—and for his part, he believed that a christian was a christian, whatever communion he might belong to : he told her and he told others that he loved her for her consistent conduct and good principles—that one of his own friends had married an Englishwoman, and that no home in Florence appeared to him so clean and cheerful and well-conducted as his, and also (a great point) he had no reason to be jealous of his wife, and that therefore, among other reasons, he himself preferred an English wife to any other sort of wife. (The Italian women are said to set about choosing a lover directly they have succeeded in choosing a husband, you are to understand !)

Well—this Mr. Righi is the son of a medical man—his mother is alive, and lives with his elder brother who is a rich tradesman in Prato, with town and country house—and it appears that the whole family are very kindly inclined towards Wilson, and even wanted them to marry and take a share of the establishment, which Mr. Righi would rather not do. The Ducal Guard is not allowed to marry, while in office, and

when they prefer to leave the office for the wife, there are various situations open to them according to their qualifications —clerkships in the palace and the like—so that he, being of rather superior education, writing a good hand and knowing something of latin, is looking out for a vacancy ; and he may get from forty to seventy pounds a year perhaps, which in Florence is a high point of prosperity. In the meantime, he shows the utmost attention and attachment, as " promesso sposo "—and even Robert, who began by disliking the whole matter on account of the difference in religion and country, confesses that he appears to be very good and superior. After all, you see, she has a full right, as every human being has, to know her own mind and judge and choose for herself in such a personal thing as marriage is—and she declares that she never could have liked that London candidate enough to become his wife. Mr. Righi is a very fine looking man—indeed handsome—with a most open, amiable, prepossessing countenance, and I have too high an opinion of Wilson to believe that she has chosen him on the mere strength of his externals. She wears a ring of betrothment, and so does he—it is the custom here : and she *hopes* to have leave to go to England with us in the spring, though the tears come into her eyes, she says, when it is talked of, he is so afraid of her being persuaded by her friends in England to stay with them when they once get hold of her. Oh, there is no danger of her not coming back again ! You may suppose how delightful all this has made Florence to Wilson, and how wonderfully it has quickened her progress in the language. I assure you she is quite fluent in Italian, and even could write Italian letters when we were on our travels. Earnestly I hope it may all come to good and happiness, and that he may prove himself worthy of one who has so much real worth, well proved. Also I do believe, for my own part that he *will*, and that she will be perfectly happy with him, great as this sacrifice is of country and hope. He promised to take her to England whenever they can afford it ; and here it is by no means an uncommon thing for English ladies' maids to marry Italians and settle happily. The English nurse, I told you of, has an Italian

husband, and declares that a better never lived. The female natives don't always give so good an account of their husbands, it is however to be confessed.

" And whose fault is that ? " said Alessandro. " Isn't it the fault of the woman for choosing to have lovers ? "

" Has *your* wife a lover ? " Wilson asked.

" If she had, I would stab to the heart both him and her."

We continue to like him (Alessandro) very much. He is as good a servant in his department, as can be—an excellent cook and manager—for he goes to market, and selects every thing—meat, poultry, fruit—and our dinners are perfect in their little way—so hot and neatly arranged. From beefsteak pies up to fricassees—he is a master, and from bread and butter puddings to boiled apple-dumplings, (curiously arranged with a mixture of currants, I mean dried currants,) an artist. He apologized in a set oration the other day for not having sooner provided us with a roast turkey—placing one on the table, as he spoke, to our extreme admiration—just such an one, Wilson thinks, as at this time of year would cost twenty shillings in London, and the whole price of which was one shilling and ten pence ! It would be hard to find a better turkey. The only fault—not in the turkey—but in Alessandro—is a wonderfully supporting principle of vanity which makes him aspire to do everything without exception. He doesn't like Wilson to interfere, or any one to give a direction ; and she declares that he repeats so many times a day : " I have been to Paris—I have been to London—I have been to Germany—I must know." She is quite tired of it.

Also he offends her by being of opinion that : " London is by far the most immoral place in the world, to his certain knowledge," (he was there for a month once) and when she talks of the domestic happiness enjoyed in England, he shakes his head disputatiously, and bids her " not to take her ideas of English domestic life from the Signor and the Signora—who were quite exceptions—he never saw anything like *their* way of living together certainly, though he had been to Paris, and been in London, and been in Germany—but the Signor was an angel, and there was the truth of it—yes the Signora was rather

an angel too—she never spent two thousand scudi on her dress at once, as *he* had seen women do—so the Signor might well be fond of the Signora—but still for a Signor to be always sitting with his wife in that way, was most extraordinary—and he had been to Paris, and been to London" and so on " da capo "—So poor Wilson's head goes round, she declares, and she leaves the field of battle from absolute exhaustion.

I quite forgot to speak about Sharpe's Magazine. Perhaps Arabel will say for me, if she is asked or has the opportunity, that just now I can't get up the steam for contributions. Don't say the absolute truth—that Robert doesn't like my writing for magazines—because it sounds too proud, and besides if she (Mrs. J.) *wished it*, I would really send her something for Sharpe's. He is very proud I tell him : but he maintains that it is taking a wrong position with the public, a thing which he himself never did, except when Hood was dying and wanted help ; and which Tennyson has never done. Blackwood, he says, may be an exception ; but even Blackwood, I see plainly, is a medium rather excepted than acceptable ; and Robert would rather, I am quite certain, that I had nothing to do even with Blackwood. I have not returned my proof yet to Blackwood. Does George understand that the £25 refers only to those fugitive poems, I sent some time ago ? Perhaps to the Prometheus also,—but if so, or not, I am by no means sure. At any rate the " meditation " stands in the separate account altogether—therefore I do call it liberal enough.

I wish you would tell me if there is anything in your Wimpole Street shapes and manners, in the way of gowns, mantles &c. worthy of Florentine imitation. I want to know, (as a matter of *curiosity* and satisfaction in the abstract,) the price in England of that very fine French cambric, of which babies caps are made, because I have heard it sworn to that things are so much cheaper with you than they used to be, that we should not know them again. Not that I believe half ! or what do the taxes mean ? . . .

Dreadful news from Rome ! the world seems quite mad just now ! Poor Rossi—and poor well-meaning Pope ! ! He

was at his prayers, while his faithless flock were pointing the cannons at him.

Dearest Henrietta, tell me everything of yourself and all you care for. I love and pray for you . . . Love to Susan and Surtees. My love is very near to you always. It is fair to say of Father Prout that he has really had two clean pocket-handkerchiefs in the course of our acquaintance. I like him for some things.

As we can't send this to-day, I shall cover this place of address with a few more words. Oh, how tantalizing it is to think of what dear Henry tells about the possibility of seeing him or somebody else here in Florence! How delighted, more than delighted, I should have been at such a burst of sunshine. We would have found room for them here, and Robert would have made all the lions of the place roar gently for them. And now I suppose, there's no chance—is there? Too tantalizing it is. . . .

Your own

BA.

18

A child expected—Petticoats and poems—Art and political economy—A Tuscan Republic—Guerrazzi and Mazzini—Disillusion—Other English may take flight, not the Brownings—A letter-debt unpaid—Wilson's marriage prospects disturbed—Women in relation to strong or weak men—Flush well again—Write—Threatened advance upon Florence.

A revolution at Florence, stirred up by the Leghornese, ejected the Grand Duke. The people regretted him, but remained passive. Seven weeks later a counter-revolution, largely supported by the peasants, restored him. The real cause of the Florentine volte face, says Mr. Browning elsewhere, was that the Leghornese did not pay their bills.

Guerrazzi at Florence was, like the unfortunate Rossi at Rome, a Moderate who tried to preserve the constitution equally threatened by the extremists on either side.

Folly was a small black-and-tan King Charles spaniel, belonging to Henrietta.

Florence,
Feb. 10, 19, 20, 1849.

Again I am writing home, my ever dearest Henrietta, and this time it is to be to you directly. It's as well to have a letter ready plumed and fledged, even if I keep it a few days, as most probably I shall have to do. You will want to hear sooner than usual perhaps, and I ought to be particularly good and considerate just now, that I know. . . .

What do you think I have done? Remember the little petticoats you sent me—four of them. Of the four I have made three. This I did with my very own fingers, and to see how they have come back from the washing, in an absolute state of whiteness, impresses me with the conviction that I was born for altering petticoats rather than making poems. Rossini (to compare great with small) swears that he was born for writing books on political economy. People are apt, you see, to mistake their vocations. . . .

Meanwhile this Tuscany of us all is swaying from left to right and from right to left, and the Grand Duke has gone to Siena, and the English ships are at Leghorn to protect English interests, and the English ambassador is writing threatening letters in the journals about what he shall do if insults are offered to the English. This, because an Englishman's house was searched the other day by the heroic " Civic Guard " in quest of fire arms—as if he had no right to his own pistols! And the Florentines talk in their piazzas, of how they mean, if the Grand Duke doesn't come back either to-morrow or next day, to—plant a " tree of liberty "—there's a sublime scheme! there's something great to be achieved after all! Also, to pass the intermediate hours, they have sent a deputation to Siena to request him—what do you think?—only to abdicate directly and " let them have a republic "—which, if he fancies he can save a teacupful of heroic Tuscan blood by it, he will do—for never was a more tender-hearted man, equal or not to this difficult crisis.

So much was written a week since. I waited for your letter—and lo, it comes!—but before it comes the Grand Duke goes to San Stephano, and we have a republic. Shall you

be frightened, I wonder, for us? No, don't be frightened—there is no need. And even if there were, you know, I *could not* move from Florence at the present moment: but there is no need for fear or removal. I believe the majority of the Florentines to be considerably more frightened than we have reason to be—that is I believe the revolutionary party to be simply the more noisy and vehement of the population, and headed entirely by strangers from Leghorn. Never did I think to witness the proclamation of a republic with feelings so cold and uncertain. Guerrazzi is a traitor, to my mind; and though Mazzini is virtuous and heroic, he is indiscreet and mistakes the stuff of which the people is made, if he think to find a great nation in the heart of it. The soldiers refuse to fraternize with the republicans, and Robert saw a body of them arrested the other day. They said that if their oath to Leopold were dissolved, they held themselves to be free men. So saying, they gave up their swords. To "give up one's sword" must be a part of even fidelity here. There is a rumour, *on grave authority*, that Guerrazzi first tried to suppress the letters of the G. Duke, and then garbled them in publication and only swerved from the design of suppression at the threat of the English ambassador to whom a duplicate had been fortunately sent by Leopold. Anything I can believe of Guerrazzi. He is false as falsehood. For the "republic," so called, my impression is that it has no more chance of standing than a straw in a storm has. There must be honesty, there must be union, there must be zeal and strength of some kind, intellectual *or* moral—and here, there are men only fit for the Goldoni theatre, the coffee houses and the sunny side of the Arno when the wind's in the north. The English are said to be dreadfully frightened. I mean, such of the English as are still resident,—and we hear of many families who have everything packed up, so as to be ready for flight. *We* shouldn't fly if we were able, seeing no cause, feeling no panic. . . .

Poor Wilson has been very anxious lately, and even before the G. Duke's departure, on account of the uncertainty of public events operating on the future of her promesso sposo,

and clouding his prospect of obtaining the situation they both counted on. She wished him very much to hold the situation from the hands of the G. Duke and to reside in Florence : but in the uncertainty, his brother, who is rich and established in wholesale haberdashery or woollen trade in Prato, offers him the loan of some hundreds of pounds to settle him in a retail shop there—the debt to be repaid at his full convenience. Now living at Prato will by no means be so pleasant to her as living at Florence—though the distance is only ten minutes by railroad—still it is said to be a very pretty and healthy little town, and perhaps the shop, in these turbulent days, will make a steadier foundation for fortune than a situation in a ducal palace. She has been vexed and disturbed about it however. She takes comfort chiefly from the prospect of a removal here after the beginning has been made at Prato. The time of the marriage of course depending on the time of prosperity.

Well, —— may like or not like walking alone, and I know I am quite wrong (I who am spoilt perfectly) to make comparative observations on any point of domestic discipline—still it does seem to be unkind, just at this time when she is unwell, poor thing, not to continue to be with her during the necessary walk : it is not kind, Henrietta, and I don't think better of her husband on account of it. Weak men may be "pulled up," but strong ones are more easily and deeply touched, be very sure ; and women are happier in their relations to strong men than to the inferior class, let the latter be ever so manly in the hunting field, and manageable at particular crises of stupidities. *That* I always thought, and now thank God, I know it.

What news of Folly ? Flush has grown quite beautiful again, and people say they don't recognize him for the same dog, and Robert quotes :

> "We went to the joiner's to buy him a coffin,
> And when we came back the little dog was laughing,"

from the great epic of Mother Hubbard, you remember. The hair has grown again all glossily and brown, and if you were to see how his eyes blaze ! but his insolence of vain-glory is

incredible even for Flush—he goes out by himself and stays hours together—knows every street in Florence—will have his own way in everything. I am never frightened now at his absences. When he thinks Robert too long in setting out on his afternoon walk, he stands up before him and barks in the most imperious manner possible. For wisdom, he gets wiser and wiser. Nobody would ever call Flush, Folly, and tell Surtees so with my love.

Now mind you one of you write directly, and let me hear as much good news as you can. I think of you my beloved Henrietta much, much! Speak of dearest papa always. Bear me in your hearts, and know that I love you—I do—I do indeed. You shall hear from me again soon. I intend it at least—May God bless you all.

Your own attached

BA.

We hear of Piedmontese and Austrian armies on their way to Florence.

19

A birthday letter—Surtees' prospects—A true heart.

March 4th, once more, was Henrietta's birthday.

Florence,
March 4, 1849.

MY BELOVED HENRIETTA,

I can't let this day go by, without the thought of you, which it brings, expressing itself upon paper,—knowing that you care less than I do for those black squares on the board, which foolishly are apt to fix my eyes on certain occasions of that sort. May God bless you, my dear dearest Henrietta, and make you happy as will make *me* happy to stand by and witness—may God bless you and yours, my dearest Henrietta! When I wrote last, through keeping my letter so long, I did not think, till it was gone to the post, of the nearness of the fourth. But if I had, I should not perhaps have kept it even a *little* longer. I should have been afraid of making you

uneasy by a prolonged silence. As it is then, I just send you a brief note—full of drawn-out wishes and prayers.

Henrietta, tell me everything of your " irons." Sir Robert seems to be rather a cast-iron maker of professions, and I don't trust to him too much. On Surtees's cousin, my reliance is infinitely greater. Sir Robert may be better than I imagine, and most earnestly do I hope to have done him gross injustice, indeed. Keep up your spirits, dearest Henrietta—for a true heart is rarer than a full purse—yet *you* have found the first. So *he* may, the second, before many days. Give him my love in the meantime. May God, who can do all, satisfy you that He does the best. I love you and think of you, and shall, while I live. . . .

How I am with you in spirit to-day and every day, and believe it through the blots of this pen.

Your ever attached

BA.

20

The Grand Duke restored by the Austrians—Dislikes Guerrazzi—Mazzini unwise—French intervention awkwardly managed, but with high motives—Fear of general war—Prohibitive cost of visiting England—First accounts of the baby—Entry of the Austrians—Arabel and homœopathy.

"Pen" Browning (Robert Wiedeman Barrett Browning), the poet's only child, was born on March 9th, 1849.

The further defeat of Novara (March, 1849) when Charles Albert renewed the war, was followed by his abdication and eleven more years of Austrian rule in northern Italy. In Rome followed the appointment of the Triumvirate ; Mazzini, virtual dictator, was confronted by a ring of interested Powers, eager to be the first in restoring the Pope to his temporalities :—Naples, already at the gate, with Spain and Austria, Catholic powers ; and quicker than the rest to transport troops by sea, the French Government, a republic equivocally suppressing a republic, but politically resolved not to let Austria utterly crush Piedmont or dominate Italy as a whole. At the same time France sought to win at home the support of a large Catholic vote, and abroad the prestige of being once more the leading

Catholic power, a prestige shaken by the fact that the Pope had sought refuge not with the French, but with King Bomba. Louis Napoleon, former Carbonaro though he was, was not in a position to act otherwise.

Florence,
May 2, 3, 4, 5, 1849.

My ever dearest Henrietta,

. . . While I write I ought not to forget however what is forced upon us every hour, the aspect of Italy politically speaking ; and how we may have to leave it ourselves—how soon is impossible to say. The Austrians are to arrive in Florence to-morrow, and the officers to be quartered on the inhabitants. I am sick at heart, and so is Robert, at the prospect of the country. I, individually, give up the Grand Duke, if it is proved, as it almost seems to be, that he has invited or connived at this Austrian intervention : but weakness of head too often is found to extend to the heart and conscience. What is clearly *ignoble*, is the resumption of his Austrian titles coincidently with the Austrian invasion. I give him up now, as Robert did a long time ago. I give him up, having fought for him gallantly. I shed some tears when he went away, and could cry again for rage at his coming back again. " Put not your trust in Princes." The patriots, however, are not much better. Guerrazzi betrayed the Duke, and then betrayed the republic. I never admired that man, the only man of energy in the Tuscan territory. But if the Austrians take him out of the fortress to shoot him, as people say, they ought to shoot half the population besides, for there has been treason everywhere. Robert and I agree that it is melancholy work to live on here. The truth is that poor Italy is distracted. She never will lie down quietly for a continuance under the heel of Austria ; and she has not wisdom nor energy enough to stand erect for an hour, neither. Mazzini is the truest hero and patriot she has to boast, and he has not wisdom. He can die for her, but never will cause her to live. That is my view of Mazzini. The French intervention has been awkwardly managed, but the *intention*, tell Arabel, is, in my opinion, noble and upright—nothing else could have saved

Rome, with Austria at the doors, and Russia behind Austria. Mazzini's party will perish by the want of wisdom in not receiving the French as friends. The opponents of liberal institutions throughout the world cry out against the French, just as the violent democrats do. The anti-liberals see (being shrewd enough as far as their own interests go) what the extreme party on the other side doesn't see—because that party is apt to see nothing till their head is dashed against the wall. Poor Rome—poor Italy! I should blame as much as any one the inconsequence of the French republic putting down a Roman republic: but this is not the thing intended. Well—it is melancholy altogether. The end may be a concussion between France and Austria and a general war. Italy will perish first, or serve for a battlefield perhaps.

Tell my dearest darling Arabel that what she wrote of our going to England touched us deeply. We thank you both. Wait a little, and let us see. At present, you must feel how the door does not open. I do wish that Florence were nearer London—oh, I wish it! From Paris one might go in fourteen hours for a guinea a-piece, instead of fifteen a-piece. From hence you see, after spending (at the lowest computation) sixty guineas in going and sixty in returning—a hundred and twenty in all—how could we possibly face the expence of a residence for two or three or four months in England? Altogether we must wait and see a little, and we may be driven out of Italy sooner than any of you think. Meanwhile, my disappointment is as great as yours—a very sad and bitter disappointment. Only with so much blessing, it is ungrateful to stand with fixed eyes upon the drawbacks. My thoughts and affections are with you always, believe me. I long too so much to show you our child before he grows out of his babyhood. You never saw such a fat, rosy, lively child at two months and a week old—really he is remarkable. Learned nurses here call upon the Blessed Virgin when they look on him. You know the engraving from Raffael's Virgin and Child which hung in my room, and which used to be criticised about the arms and legs of the infant, as being "too fat"—"too thick," said some of your Wimpole Street critics. Baby's arms and legs perfectly

justify the engraving, I assure you. Robert calls him sometimes " a little Bacchus," he is so rosy and round. . . .

" O, questo bambino è proprio rabbioso "—the nurse says. Tell Arabel that her insult about my carrying him by his head is quite gratuitous. Nevertheless I acknowledge that he seems to like better being with Robert than with me. Robert nurses him admirably, and the child smiles when he looks in his face. . . . I never told you of our arrangement with the nurse. We pay her every month—besides which she is furnished with her nurse's costume. Here in Italy, it is generally arranged so. It consists of a large uncut Tuscan straw hat with long blue streamers—gowns trimmed with blue ribbons, (blue is a *boy's* colour, pink a girl's) white collars, smart white aprons, made of muslin, pockethandkerchief &c. For the winter she is to have a black beaver hat and black feathers. We like her very much. She is frank and honest, and full of mirth and good humour, and very fond of baby—whom she compliments upon not being at all like an English child.

" What did she mean by *that?* " I asked, not immediately perceiving the compliment.

" O, c'e qualche cosa di strana ! " in all those English children, but this child is like a true downright Italian ! Wilson and I in our patriotism set up defence and glorification of English children, but she shook her head, there was something unpleasant about them " qualche cosa di strana."

While I was writing these last sentences, I heard her calling me—Wilson was out, and Robert at the Post Office—" Signora—signora—ecco i Tedeschi ! " The Austrians had arrived. We ran out on the terrace together—and up from the end of the street and close under our windows came the artillery, and baggage-waggons—the soldiers sitting upon the cannons motionless, like dusty statues. Slowly the hateful procession filed under our windows. The people shrank back to let them pass, in the deepest silence—not a word spoken, scarcely a breath drawn.

" Ah, signora," said our nurse, " fa male di vedere questo. Sono brutti questi Tedeschi."

For my part I felt my throat swelling with grief and indignation. Oh, to think of our ever seeing such a sight from these windows. I wish we were a thousand miles away. As to the Grand Duke he is made of the stuff of princes—faithless and ignoble. Robert comes in and tells me that the Austrian General's proclamation is up—"Invited by your Grand Duke——!" So it is confessed at last—the Duke has done it all. Wretched, infamous man. That ever I should have felt compassion for that man! Twelve thousand Austrians in Florence, and more coming. In deep silence and consternation the people see them enter. God bless Italy.

Do write oftener, my dearest Henrietta and Arabel. . . . Tell me of Arabel and the homoeopathy: but she must persevere, or it will all avail nothing. Take care of yourself if you love me. I will tell you of the baptizing—it is not done yet. My dear dearest Henrietta, love your own

BA.

21

A tea-fight—Economy in postages inconceivable—Delights of Lucca —R. B.'s only sins against her.

For Kneadcakes, see Letter 8.

Bagni di Lucca,
July 20, 1849.

MY BELOVED HENRIETTA,

Your letter was left two days in the post, and I answer it without waiting for the promised one. I want much to hear from Wimpole Street. I have behaved like an angel in writing you letter after letter: and, except this little shred of paper, no return has come to me. Oh, what a shame! Seriously, *don't* you feel ashamed you and Arabel! I am to have a letter, it seems, some time or other, but I dare say it won't come for a week after all—cruel of you, it is.

Since I wrote to you we have given an entertainment—a tea and coffee—and very magnificent it was, in the manner of dearest Trippy's—only following at a humble distance—

tell her. Kneadcakes by Wilson, breadcake by Alessandro, figs and strawberries and pigeon pie and ham, " ricotta," a sort of cream cheese—spread out with great taste and appreciated by most active appetites. Baby appeared for a moment, before he went out with Wilson and his balia for their evening excursion, in a cap trimmed full with rose-coloured ribbons, and cheeks full of roses to correspond, not forgetting his rose-coloured knitted shoes, with white tops, imitation of stockings. So pretty he looked, smiling though he wanted to get away. . . .

Dearest Henrietta, I just have your letter. Thank you a thousand times ! thank you, my best Arabel ! If you knew how delightful it is to me to have letters from one, you would never say such wickedness as one of you does about postage, (oh, I never in my life could conceive of economy in postages !) and the other of you still more cruelly and perversely about what I should not or should like to hear—about my being teased by this or that subject. Surely you have forgotten all about me. Your happiness is the life of my heart. I love you both better than I ever did. Remember that, and tell me all, everything, don't leave out a detail. . . .

I don't wonder at your dear visitors being astonished at my prowess. I assure you I astonish myself still more, when I wake suddenly and find myself on the peaks of mountains—or at least more than half way up to their peaks. The beauty of the scenery and walks is something past description ; and Robert and I enjoy it all to the uttermost, only wishing that we could draw to us all those whom we love to stand beside us. Yesterday in consequence of Robert's outrageous proceedings I promised never to go out with him again as long as I lived—though perhaps (if he repents) I may. Think of his twice snatching me up and carrying me up a long steep—long enough and steep enough to incur the risk of breaking a vessel in the chest or heart. I was so frightened that fatigue would have been nothing at all to it, and quite seriously angry. Sins of this sort are his only sins against me. I see no situation and no rooms which I like as well as our own. We have the pure mountain air here, not *keen* as it would be in England.

We mean to stay as long as we can—to the end of October if possible—if it should not be too cold. You know we have taken our apartment until then, as it is the custom to take rooms "by the season." Tell me everything. This is not as long a letter as usual: but there is a packet of letters to send; and you had a double letter from me not long since. May God bless my much much loved Henrietta. I think of you always, and never cease to be

Your most affectionate

BA.

22

Keep out of range of cholera—Third anniversary of marriage: love increases—Arabel, and Ragged Schools and cholera—Excursion to Prato Fiorito.

Of the effect of the cholera on London, Major Altham notes his own experience:—

"The cholera was carrying off, at this time, hundreds a day in London, and the clubs were empty. The Editor breakfasted one morning at the Junior United Service, and found only one other man in the coffee-room. Men's hearts were failing them. It was like the plague in the time of Charles II."

In the end, the Browning child had no difficulties about language. He became bilingual as regards Italian and England, and soon added French and a little German to his stock.

Bagni di Lucca,
Sept. 19, 1849.

MY DEAREST DEAR HENRIETTA,

I hope you are all getting good from the free air and scenery of Worthing. It was delightful to me to hear that you are at least out of London; and if my own dear papa were with you, I should be still lighter of heart. You frighten me by talking of his staying. Think of the risk he must run! Do persuade him to go down to you. Oh, do, Henrietta. When you say, "Don't be frightened about the Cholera," you talk to the east wind. I am frightened, must

be frightened, can't help being frightened. The cholera was always more alarming to me than revolutions and assassinations—those, we are used to: they have began to stab a little about the streets again at Leghorn. If Cholera was half as bad at Florence as it has been in other places, do you think I would not tease Robert till he went away? Indeed, indeed I would. Now, in London, it has been worse and more persistent than in any European city—so how could I help being afraid? Oh, do get Papa to go to you! As for Worthing, I would rather that you had gone to Folkestone—to some more elevated place. Worthing is not a place I should have selected. Even Brighton would have been better. But you are at Worthing; and may God bless the place, and preserve you safe in it. . . .

Thank you (and thank you, beloved Arabel!) for the remembrance of our 12th—our third anniversary. Do you both of you thank God for me—I am not thankful enough! There is more love between us two at this moment, than there ever has been. He is sure of me—I am surer of him—I am closer to him and he to me. Ours is a true marriage, and not a conventional *match*. We live heart to heart all day long and every day the same. Surely you may thank God for us. God be praised.

On the 12th baby came in to me with a rose in his fist, stretching it out for me to take; and then he took another to Robert. (That was dear Wilson's contrivance.) . . .

Robert reproaches me with talking to him in Italian—he hates the idea of his not speaking English with his earliest breath. Robert being highly patriotic, you are to understand, and especially when the farthest from England. But as the balia talks incessantly to our child from morning till night, and he hears necessarily nothing but Italian therefore, except from Robert and me—even Wilson being forced to speak before him in Italian, to the balia and Alessandro—I really don't see that we should assist the development of his intelligence by confounding him with another language. We have heard of a child two years old, who stood stock still between the two tongues, and couldn't get on with either.

Oh, I agree with Robert that I don't want him to be an Italian —I should be grieved and humiliated by it—only, you see, his English opportunities will come in their turn. No fear that he shouldn't talk English! And are we not going to England next year, and won't he learn naturally what we wish him to know, without the pedantry of forcing it on him now?

We have a letter to-day from England. The cholera "raging." A most frightening letter, altogether! The London reports of death are quite underrated, it said—the mortality dreadful. It is a great anxiety. Oh, I am so thankful that you are at Worthing and that my darling Arabel is away from the atmosphere of Ragged schools. *Make* Papa go to you, if any persuasion will make him. I am unhappy at the idea of his daring the dangers. Cholera is in the north of Italy, creeping down to us, I dare say, but Florence was altogether free from it, last cholera-time, and may escape again—if God wills.

Tell Arabel that—with regard to the forbidding fruit to me, I have scarcely been able to touch fruit all the summer. The air of the place is damp—over-moist, at least. Not that I have been unwell—very well, on the contrary—Always I look well, people say, very well—and to prove that I am quite well altogether, I shall tell you of an excursion we made two days ago to the "Prato Fiorito," a mountain, five miles off, famous for its embroidery of flowers during the month of May, and one of the wonders of the Baths of Lucca. We set off, with three guides, at half past eight in the morning, I, Wilson and the balia on donkies, and Robert and Alessandro on mountain-ponies, Baby riding by turns with Wilson and the balia; and we returned at six in the evening—safe and alive—which really if you were to see the route, might astonish you a little. Of course there was not a road for the wheel of even a wheelbarrow; and no donkey nor poney, except by an especial education for these mountains, could keep his feet a moment. On some points of the journey, a single slip of the foot would have precipitated one into deep ravines—frightful they were. And for the rest—pile the houses of London one upon another in a great heap and try

to climb them! Extraordinary how we got up—still more extraordinary how we got down. We *walked* down several of the descents to escape the horrible sensation of being jolted over the heads of our steeds. You do not imagine what wild work it was. The scenery, in the meanwhile, magnificent! Where the chesnut-forests could cling, we made our way; and along the dry beds of exhausted torrents, the loose rocks crumbling round us. At the top you look round on a great world of innumerable mountains, the faint sea beyond them, and not a sign of cultivation—not a cottage—not a hut. Only there was a shepherd keeping his sheep, and a few goats—all of the wildest race. We let our donkeys and ponies out to graze with these; and sate down with the guides to cold chicken and ham and tart—I spread my shawl on the grass, and baby rolled over and over on it. Wasn't it daring of us to take Baby? He was the least tired of the party, and never cried once throughout the ten long hours, (six on donkey and back)—came home laughing and talking to himself, though burnt red with the sun, poor little darling, and didn't seem over-shaken or bruised the following day, as well he might be. . . .

Your ever much attached

BA.

23

Gifts for herself and Baby—Journey back to Florence—the child's look of the family—First doubts of Wilson's Guardsman—Difficult dates for next year's visit—Loves and greetings.

Florence,
October 19, 1849.

MY BELOVED HENRIETTA AND ARABEL,

How kind of you, how good of you. How I thank you both for those beautiful presents—Such fabulous sashes, and mittens, (always of use!) and oh, my own dearest Arabel, such a perfect frock. . . .Never was a prettier frock seen! How I thank you! How I look at all the stitches and trace your fingers in them, dear, dear Arabel! But, Arabel, you magnified your office a little—you took yourself

to be working for some small Titan, I think. We tried on the frock directly, and its waist came somewhere across the abdomen of the living subject. He is such a little creature, you forgot to consider—very fat, but with slight bones—and then only seven months old! If he grow prodigiously, the frock will do for next summer perhaps; and then if we get to England, he will appear in glory. Wilson is always lamenting that we have not "worked robes" for him, and this meets her ideal—it is "perfectly elegant" she says. And I am glad it is too large, because so it will last longer, and be available in the summer when people needn't wear coats and hide their sashes. . . .

We arrived in Florence on Wednesday, after a very fatiguing journey, having missed the railroad at Lucca (through Alessandro's miscalculation) and been forced to post it to Pisa —six hours on the roughest road I have travelled in Italy—and then came the rail-carriage to Florence. If, as Robert said, "we hadn't had such a saint of a child" it would have been worse, and indeed the saintship was confined to him, for we were all vexed and tired. . . . He and Flush agree in their marked preference of populous streets with carriages and men, to forests and mountains. . . . I am afraid that he even admires the Austrian uniform. . . . Wilson declares that he is like my family, and particularly like you, Henrietta; and once when I met him out of doors, he struck me as like Arabel —there is a look of my family in him most undeniably—only the mouth and chin are fac-simile's of Robert's. So I don't know how you will make it out.

We are very glad to get back to our chairs and tables, and I am ignoble enough to be not sorry that I can walk out without having to go up and down a ladder—or the equivalent of a ladder: and yet the dear mountains and silences, how I miss them. No instance of cholera has occurred. Moreover the general health has much improved since the cooler weather has set in.

Mr. Righi has had an attack at Prato, and didn't write to Wilson for a long time. We were sure something must be the matter; and the balia who had observed to me one morning,

not to make poor " Lisa " too anxious, judiciously broke out at noon-day, in her presence with a—

" No, non posso credere che sia morto ! ! ! "

I really couldn't help smiling at this singular proof of consideration for " (Lisa ") Wilson's anxiety, while I said :

" Morto ? comè morto ! ma non si pensa di queste cosé."

The balia is the completest baby grown up I ever saw or heard of. When the explanation of the silence came, he had been ill with the prevailing malady. Still it does seem to me that Mr. Righi hadn't written quite as often as he might have done ; and Wilson has expected him every day since we arrived, and he does not appear. I have a high opinion of Mr. Righi, of his attachment for Wilson ; but if he isn't here to-morrow (I think *he will*), and if he is in good health, I shall not know what to conclude. She fancies that he has suffered some vexation about the Grand Duke. He, like all these Florentines, made no proof of heroism in fidelity toward the sovereign ; and though averse at heart to Guerrazzi's revolution, was submissive to it in fact. The Grand Ducal guard has been dissolved—and it is surmised that his retiring pay has been suspended with that of others. At the same time there's the shop at Prato, which is said to be doing well. We shall see. I think he will come to-morrow and explain everything : but I do hope to take back Wilson to England as Wilson, if we go to England next summer, which I hope we shall. . . . God bless you all. Grateful thanks from your attached

BA.

24

Her father's age and health—The balance of exchange in letters—Christmas wishes.

Florence,
Dec. 22, 1849.

MY EVER DEAREST HENRIETTA,

I have your little note to-day, and thank you for it much and much. Upbraid me as you please, but I can't be easy—satisfied in the fancies of my heart about Papa. As

to my folly *in expecting him to be as strong as he used*—Why, Henrietta, it certainly is not *age* which makes him weaker. Robert's father is older than mine—Mr. Kenyon is several years older than Papa—yet how " brilliant " he is, by all the accounts we receive ! Besides the fact is that Papa is not *well*. One year and a quarter ago from this moment, I was told by truthful persons who had not seen him since Hope End days, that they did not observe the slightest change except in his being fatter. So the change has taken place only in the last year. I beseech you to write a little oftener and let me hear of him everything. Oh, I wonder that you should wonder at my being anxious. As to age, age, age—it certainly isn't age which produces the change I ask about ; and even if he were ten, fifteen, or twenty years older than he is, that consideration would be a cause for *more* anxiety rather than less. Now, I won't say any more about it—only do let me hear more frequently. Oh, do—you dearest, kindest people, both of you. See how much oftener I write than you, either of you do, because you are two, and I—one—so that for every single letter of yours, Henrietta, or your's, Arabel, I send at least two. Perhaps you call *that* an audacious calculation, after my silence which vexed you so : but it's a true calculation in spite of the silence, and however insolently put forward. For the silence, forgive me ! It shan't happen again, if I can help it. Forgive that, and forgive too what I have written to-day, which isn't too amusing certainly. I shall not yield to bad spirits—I will try to exaggerate nothing. You, in the meanwhile, will make allowance for me, and understand what it is to look at some subjects from certain positions, and with the length of Europe between me and the dearly loved. May God allow for us all. . . .

Tell me of Trippy—how she is, dear thing, and give her a heap of kisses from me. Tell her that I wish her a new happy new year—May God bless her. I fancy her at your Christmas dinner, and wish I could help to put on her cap—there's one of my Christmas wishes for myself ! May the rest not be as vain. I think of Wimpole Street just now. May God bless you and guide you—there are thoughts which haunt me.

Arabel's letter is a lamp to look at from the end of a sort of darkness, and I look to it.

Will you both write oftener? Give my love to Surtees and Susan; and love to dear Lizzie.

Your own

BA.

25

Letters and news—Projected visit to Rome—Possibilities of Paris; R. B.'s willingness, even for New York!—Novelists seeking commissionerships—Birthday letters and tears—Wilson gets over broken engagement—Mr. Barrett and Free Trade—Father Prout and her poem on a dead child.

The poem in question was "A Child's Grave at Florence," which appeared in the *Athenæum* on December 22nd, 1849. It was written on her friend Sophia Cottrell's child.

The faithless Righi had backed out of his engagement to Wilson. She was to meet a happier fate.

Florence,
Feb. 20, 1850.

MY EVER, EVER DEAREST HENRIETTA,

See what paper I take to write to you on. Read down to the end of the strip, and then the next side. No other is within reach just now. I have Arabel's letter and I thank her for it with my whole heart, and you for your dear little note. It is delightful to hear about Papa, and has made me very happy. Now be *perfectly* good, and write often and in detail, and be sure that I will "reciprocate," and be good too—indeed I don't understand how you happened to wait so long for my last letter but the last. I didn't mean to behave so badly; and the note which followed so quickly atoned perhaps for the sin.

We *talk* of letting this apartment next winter and going to Rome. We must see Rome and Naples before we leave Italy for good. I have (in my private head) a great longing for making trial of Paris as a residence—because Paris combines so much, and is so near England that we could all meet in a few hours at any time, whereas here the distance frightens me. Then Paris is delightful; and one lives there in the midst of

a brilliant civilization, as free a life as a mountaineer in the mountains. We might carry our furniture up the Rhone. Don't speak of this plan to anybody, nor write of it, if you please. I just write to you as I dream to myself. I have had it in my private head for some time, but didn't dwell too much on it, despairing of Robert's liking it as I did, and feeling very little inclined to persuade him into any step he did not like while he took it. Oh, he would have done that or anything for me—he is so perfectly, so beyond example and expression good and kind to me, that if I were to let him see any strong wish of mine upon any subject, he would fulfil it out of a sort of necessity of the heart: so that on this very account, I like rather to watch his inclinations than to express mine. Now I will tell you. He is in antagonism, as you may suppose, with the very idea of America under the narrow, hard money-prizing unartistical social character. In the midst of a burst of his against this, about a fortnight since, I said suddenly:

"Conceive, Robert! If I were to set my heart on going to live in New York! What then?"

"Why then, you should go directly! Only *don't* set your heart on it, Ba."

Well, but let me go on to say that the other evening, he said of his own accord:

"I know you like Paris; and really after we have seen a little more of Italy, and when your chest is a little stronger, I shouldn't at all mind going to live there. Oh, I shouldn't dislike it indeed. We might try it in any case &c. &c."

So I was delighted, and we have really a prospect, you see. The winter is cold but short, and I am scarcely ever able to go out in the winter, from one cause or another, even here; and the climate is free from the fogs and uncertainties of England. Yet all this is in the clouds, and you are by no means to consider it worth mentioning to *any one*, mind. What I care for most of all is the vicinity to England and the delightful possibility of frequent intercourse with you.

Tell George that Dickens and Thackeray are both, I hear, eating their terms to prepare themselves—for *commissionerships* —when their brains are worked out by novel-writing. I call

it a scandalous abuse, and wrong to laborious members of the legal profession. The fault is with the public, of course, and not with the individuals ! . . .

Remember Baby's birthday is the 9th of March. Every year, I have a hearty cry over your letters. It is very stupid, but I can't help myself. Love me as I love you, my own beloveds in my heart and soul.

Wilson is in excellent spirits and looking quite well. She is *over it* completely, which does the greatest credit to her good sense and rectitude of character. How could she continue to love such a man ? Give my love to my very dear Minny, and say how sorry I am to hear of her being so lame. The cold weather always disagreed with her in this respect. . . .

Papa has not *changed*, tell Arabel, on the subject of free trade—he always *was* opposed to it—wouldn't let me write for the anti-corn law association, and was furious about the sugar restraints being taken off. What newspaper do you take in now ?

We have heard from Father Prout, who sends his " best love " to me ; and says he took the poem " on a babby " in the Athenæum, for a monody on the " little classic being he examined " in Florence ; and very glad he was to find out his mistake. Think of my sitting down directly to write a monody on my darling—if God took him from me. What an idea ! God bless you, all of you, both of you my beloved sisters ! Dearest Henrietta, I am with you in heart so often ! My love to Surtees and Susan, always. Kiss my dear, dear Treppy for me—Robert's love. I can't read this over, and have written it against time.

Your own

BA.

26

Henrietta's marriage—Why not live in Florence ?

Henrietta and Surtees Cook had been engaged for five years, and attached yet longer. Mr. Barrett's peremptory rejection of the " insult " of a request for his formal permission, coupled with threat of banishment to his daughter, left no

alternative. They took their fate in their hands as Elizabeth had done. E. B. B. only heard of their intention a few days before it was carried out; a previous letter asking her advice had miscarried.

Mrs. Martin is E. B. B.'s old friend. See Letter 9.

Florence,
April 16, 1850.

May God bless you, my beloved very dear Henrietta. May God bless you and Surtees. He shall be a brother to me; and every happy hour he gives you shall be a fresh claim on my love and gratitude towards him. Dearest Henrietta, what emotion the letter of Arabel's has stirred me to! How I felt every line of it, gone with you through the whole—if God pleases, happiness and love catch up the ends of it for ever. Robert brought the letter in to me with the exclamation:

"A white seal! the marriage must be over."

Surtees was perfect, as his whole conduct (let him suffer me to say so,) from first to last has been. Our brothers cannot help feeling this. Now you are married I may say for both Robert and myself that we think you have done well and wisely. I am not uneasy about you—I believe you will be happy; and I happily and trustfully leave you in God's hands, when I pray to Him for your full earthly blessedness. May He bless you, my dearest, dearest Henrietta. Will you write to me as frankly, I wonder, as I used to write to you, (and *do*,) telling me all the little things? Leave nothing out if you care to delight me—nothing is too little to tell. Why should you be tied to England, in which the whole way of life is so expensive? Now in Florence we might arrange things for you to a fabulous degress of cheapness—(command us as you please.) Write to me quickly, quickly. I heard from Mrs. Martin, a few days since, she begging me to let her know how it all passed off. She is the kindest and truest of affectionate friends.

So now, Henrietta, I must leave you. Love me, and believe that I love you. Robert and I join our hearts together to offer you both the most tender congratulations. Tell dear Surtees that I feel as if your happiness might cheerfully be

trusted in his careful hands. God bless you both. I send you a kiss from Baby for good luck. (Baby's kiss.) Wilson affectionately wishes you all happiness. What a dream it must seem to you. Doesn't it?

Your most attached

BA.

27

Joy in Henrietta's marriage—Arabel's future—Housekeeping in expensive England and abroad—Possibilities of Paris—Feathers for a fairy-like baby—R. B. learns to spin a top for him—Visits.

Florence,
May 25, 1850.

My dearest Henrietta's letter has been read, re-read, re-re-read. It was the most delightful of gifts to me. Yet I delayed writing in reply, because of our uncertainty about England—whether we could go or not. But let me speak of the good which is settled, the blessing which is given—of your marriage, my dear dearest Henrietta. May God be thanked. I think of you with deep thankfulness, with faith and hope and joy. You will be very happy, Henrietta, and all fear is stilled when I think of you. Arabel is one of the purest, most disinterested of human beings, and looks off from herself in an attitude of such genuine nobleness, that I admire her rather than fear for her. For the rest—"God will provide"—her turn will come. You will please to remember, Henrietta, that Arabel belongs to me if any cause should dislodge her from her present home without providing her with another of her own choice—that is a fixed thing. I speak in time.

And now about Somersetshire. Do write and tell me all the details, and spare nothing, for I want to hear everything. You delighted me by your account of the housekeeping, the insipient housekeeping of Weston-super-Mare, and edified me too, seeing that Robert and I exclaimed with immense approbation upon your goodness and prudence in all the arrangements. Very wise of you to take no maid for the present. It is an expense and an incumbrance in many ways, when travelling. If I were you I should be very *slow* about taking a house

in Somersetshire or elsewhere, till my prospects widened a little. Be certain of this, both of you, that the social exigencies as well as the positive taxes of England make it just the dearest place in the world. Except perhaps California. I should cry aloud for you to come out to Florence, where every one who understands, (by whom I don't mean Arlette and her husband) lives for nothing and a half—only *I* don't understand exactly what dear Surtees's military engagements may be, and the travelling from Italy is dreadfully expensive certainly. The sea is worse than the land. Four pounds from Leghorn to Marseilles, to begin with. It is a great objection in my mind to Florence, and just on the ground of being nearer England, Robert and I have a strong inclination in favour of Paris—only that he is afraid for me of the Parisian climate. Still we talk bravely of making the trial—the winter there is much shorter than in England, and the atmosphere is not encumbered as we have it at home ; and the truth is, that wherever I am, I am forced to be a prisoner for some three months of the year, to the house. . . . [Paris], is, for the present, all talk with us, observe—our Florentine apartment belongs to us till next May, and perhaps then, we shall scarcely tear ourselves away. Only I have a strong inclination towards making a trial of Paris ; and if I were you and Surtees, I should be drawn towards some such trail. The north of France is within reach as Wales is. It would virtually double your income, and give you more freedom in every way. On the continent you escape a quantity of Mrs. Grundyism, and can live as you like, nobody making you afraid. Do think a little before you get hampered. Surtees, don't you agree with me, you who are wise ? Arabel says something to me about Pau—Pau is a long journey off—nearly as far as Florence. Now you will write to me about all these things. We will go to England if we can, to talk of them, but in the meantime make sure by writing.

You are so impertinent as to criticise Baby's feathers, which I think the prettiest of adornments for children, and would not miss for the world. They are very fashionable here—you see all the little princes decked with them, and my child is a

little prince in his way too, I assure you. The feather doesn't stand up—it is long and drooping, and fastened round the hat like a wreath. I never grudge any thing for Baby. He runs about looking like a fairy born of a lily and rose. . . . So offended I was with Arabel for saying that Arlette's child was forwarder than he. Perhaps in his teeth, but certainly not in his walking and understanding. Robert and I go to the toy-shops and buy him toys ; and Robert spent the whole of last Sunday morning between breakfast and church-time, in learning to spin a top, I standing by and giving impotent counsel. He said he considered it a " religious duty "—a doctrine which I hope you won't set down as heretical. Now I don't mean to write any more of Baby to-day, because I have just sense enough to be half-conscious of growing dull in the extreme, and because, with Surtees near you, that certainly won't be tolerable. I think I shall send the slip-slop about Baby to Arabel for the future ; and talk to you about love and housekeeping. Shall it be so ? . . .

I wish that some warm-hearted people had wider sympathies. It is too common to measure off one's tender affections by the yard—very narrow stuff too ! Write to me, Henrietta, and tell me all. I must write to thank Surtees for his welcome little note. May God bless you both, to one another, and to those who love you—among them to

Your ever attached

BA.

28

Patriotism and pence, the problem of living in England—Advantages of Paris—A snorer—Wise expenses—House-hunting ; R. B.'s first absence—The vacant Laureateship—Mrs. Martin gives news of Arabel—Arabel's prophesied " companion "—Herefordshire would awaken painful memories—Pen and the coffee tray.

Wordsworth had died on April 23rd this year. The *Athenæum*, under her friend Mr. Chorley, had suggested that the succession should fall to Mrs. Browning as the equal of any living poet, and as a woman, an appropriate choice for Laureate to a Queen. Tennyson, however, held the field. E. B. B.'s

own suggestion of Leigh Hunt seems to hint that the office should be regarded as something charitable rather than creative.

Hope End, E. B. B.'s old home, like Torquay, where her brother Edward was drowned, was too full of poignant memories. As she wrote elsewhere (Letters I, 414) :—" There are places stained with the blood of my heart for ever, where I could not bear to stand again."

Florence,
July 7, 1850.

My beloved Henrietta,

This rather a note than a letter. There will be no time, I fear, to write a letter. But an opportunity arrives, and I have your *notina* to incite me. You don't mean to write again too, until you hear from me, you say. So I shall throw a heartfull of words upon paper, and not apologize for haste or confusion of structure.

Your plans are excellent. There can be no harm in your scheme, for a few months : but as to *living on* in England, your patriotism will be a sublime thing if you and Surtees should prefer doing so really. Everybody begins (or nearly everybody) by not bearing to live out of England. Upon trial you would find it wonderfully easy to reconcile yourselves to quadrupling your income and living free of the sense of small stringent economies. Still of course you know best—only my private opinion is that England should be less dear, if we are to practise the virtue of preferring to live in her. In that case, it would only remain for us to try to get over the objection of her having the worst climate in the world. Oh, I hope I shall never live another winter in England. I am not patriotic enough for it, really. I leave it altogether to you and Surtees. But I want to be nearer, and to make the effort about Paris ; and I have hope that we may be able to manage it. . . . Switzerland and Germany are accessible from the railroads. We shall have art and literature in Paris, and Robert being a member of the Historical Institute, and another literary society, (for which they sent him diplomas) we shall be able to know the best people we like to know. So that's our scheme ! We shall avoid the English and live our own free lives. As to revo-

lutions, I am never afraid of them—I have seen them too near. The nearness to England is an immense recommendation, and I like Paris of itself. I like that life, and mobility, and above all that continual beat of mind. Robert always prophesied that I should drag him to Paris one day, and now he sees the advantages as I do, and is not dragged but runs. Well, we are not gone yet. Normandy and Brittany are cheaper of course than Paris or Florence—Only one should not begin by taking a furnished house—nor should one end by tearing other people to death, particularly patriots, like you and Surtees.

. . . Oh yes ! go to London in November ! I am delighted to think that you are wise enough to mean to go ! Yes, but don't have Mrs. B—— she snores " comme quatre ! " After all this sort of expense, and *postage*, are two things I never grudge—which neither of us grudge—the happiness is more than worth the money. So mind you write as often as you can. Oh, I want to hear everything ! See how we are disappointed about England, and how you ought to make it up to us by writing !

The thermometer was at eighty six in the shade at six o'clock yesterday evening ; and though I have certainly felt much intenser heat in Italy than this, still it is trying for our young child. (His hair curls all over his head in short curls like a lamb's fleece of gold—if there was ever a Golden Fleece, except in the mythology.) We thought of taking a villa in the neighbourhood of Leghorn. We are in great perplexity where to go. There is a rumour about a villa in the Apennines—four miles from Vallombrosa. We don't know how to decide. Robert went to Sienna last week, to see if it would suit us—the first time he ever left me. I did not feel quite up to going with him—and it was necessary for him to go. He went at seven in the morning, and was to return at seven, by the train. Such a day I passed, feeling as if I had lost my head—or something ; and at seven there was no train, in consequence of a festa. I sate up till twelve and went to bed perfectly miserable, expecting not to see him till the next day : but at three in the morning I heard a voice under the window softly :

" Ba ! "

" Robert ! " said I, " is it really you ? "

Yes—he could not make the porter hear, and the gates of the palazzo were closed of course. So I jumped out of bed, and without waiting to put on even my slippers, ran along the passage to Baby's room, and woke Wilson and the balia, who woke the porter, who opened the gates—and we were all right again. He had found a sort of halting crazy vehicle, and travelled in it with two priests, as anxious as he was, to get back to Florence.

He was " so afraid lest I should be uneasy "—and " had not dined away from me after all," he said—having only had a glass of milk and some biscuits. I, on the contrary, was so unfeeling as to have eaten an excellent dinner. There was a humiliation ! Also the expedition proved in vain, for Sienna was far from desirable for us, he thought, with an uninteresting country—a want of verdure and trees.

As to the Laureateship, I am not likely to have it in any case. Oh no !—notwithstanding the knight errantry of the Athenæum, for which we are much obliged to it ; and I can't help thinking, besides, that Leigh Hunt should have the office on every account. He has not much delicacy and good taste, but he is a great man and a good man in spite of all, and the world has been too slow in recognizing these facts.

. . . Thank dear Mrs. Martin from me for her most welcome letter, which was so long in coming. I hope, by the way, that *people* who are long in coming, may be welcome too. Delightful news she gives me of Arabel's good looks and spirits —my poor darlingest Arabel ! and oh, I do wish that " some companion," according to the prophecy, would quickly bring her out to me ! ! Colwall must be looking lovely with roses : but I would rather see Mr. and Mrs. Martin and find them looking as well as you report, than acres of roses. As for Herefordshire, it is all bitter with the bitterness of my heart. I could not sit and eat and sleep in it, I feel still. You are probably right, and I wrong : but I am made so.

. . . Robert's love, of course, goes with mine to Surtees. I will write to dear Mrs. Martin, tell her. Think of my forget-

ting to tell you that Mrs. Martin appreciates Surtees fully and highly. Baby comes in a mysterious way to tell me that the coffee tray is brought in—so I get up and go to the sofa, and set him by me there, while I make it, which is his delight. He sits between Robert and me, and has a spoonful of coffee first from one cup and then from another. God bless you both with just such a blessing, and whatever else you wish for!

Your attached

BA.

29

Letters with good news—Fresh air as medicine; a visit to Siena—Description—Is better again.

Siena,
Sept. 7 & 8, 1850.

Thank you for your great kindness in writing again to me, my ever dearest Henrietta. Nothing could be kinder nor more welcome. I had your letter just as we were coming off to this place—the day before—and we were off in the morning at seven. So delightful it is always to hear of your getting on so admirably and living so happily, that even apart from your dear affectionateness, which is a precious thing, the letters would be precious.

As for me, you will have heard from Arabel of me, and how Dr. Harding would insist on sending me away—"leaving all my medicines behind," as he said—and indeed the heaps of empty bottles and my white face did not prove together much as to the profiting of medicines—the change of air was to be more effectual. But we missed our villa in the Apennines, Henrietta, near Vallombrosa, and Arabel at least will compassionate that miss. It was taken by somebody else during my illness, for the sake of shooting. Upon which we resolved at once upon Siena, notwithstanding Robert's unpleasant impressions, because Siena is famous at least for its good fresh air, and because what we went for was health after all. This is Saturday. At seven in the morning of last Saturday we left Florence by railroad,—I in a miserably helpless state, having to be lifted about like a baby, looking ghostly

rather than ghastly, and feeling as if it were a most uncongenial effort, and that I would rather be left in my own chair at Florence. We had to stay at the hotel at Siena till Sunday, in spite of Robert's efforts; but on Sunday afternoon we were settled in this villa—a small house about two miles from the city, built on the "hill of the winds," as it is called, with windows looking to all points of the compass, and with various and magnificent views on all sides. From one window you have a view of Siena, with its Duomo and its campanile, and its Italian colouring over all! From another, you look over the vast sweep of the maremma to the mountains of Rome. From another, the whole country leaps under the sun, alive with verdure and vineyards—very beautiful it is indeed. All we want is water. Then our villa stands in the midst of its own extensive grounds—its own vineyard and olive-ground,—not to boast too much of its little square flower garden full of flowers. The walls hold the grapes up in garlands; and we see purple touches of them down through the vistas of the vineyard which is planted up to the door. The house itself is small, consisting of seven rooms, and a sort of belvéder, (*specola*, we call it in Italy) at the top, from whence we enjoy the views more absolutely. The air is exquisitely fresh, like English air for freshness, and like Italian air for elasticity. Wilson would have it at first that it was a great deal too cold, and that we should all be ill in consequence, till I showed her the thermometer standing at seventy! Why, who would have believed it? Certainly I have not been able to sleep with the window open since I came, I, who, since June, have never had my bedroom windows closed. I am famous for sitting and sleeping in a gale of wind (when it's to be attained) for really I cannot bear the dead heat which is so common in Italian summers. In Florence it has not been so oppressive as usual this year, and we left it much cooler. Still there was room for improvement. Oh, Henrietta, *our* "autumn" by no means begins on the "first of August" I assure you; and till half November is over we are scarcely secure of a return of too warm days.

Now you will want to hear of me rather than the climate.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BARRETT, 1823.

From a sketch by her mother at Hope End, when she was ill.

I am considerably better—essentially better and stronger—able to move about on my own feet and without anybody's help, and looking—why, I can't conscientiously praise my looks much yet: but I may say that they are mending. I don't quite look so.* Eyes swamped in blackness! The Italians, on our journey, seemed to draw back from me with horror—(they are such contagionists,) concluding that I was either just recovering from a milliary fever, or *not* recovering from a phthisical disorder. It is delightful to feel better and stronger again, and now that the strength has *set in*, it will come faster and faster, I dare say. . . .

Your attached

BA.

30

Is quite well—Domestic existence—Tractarianism.

E. B. B.'s lack of sympathy with Tractarianism has already been noted, Letter 12.

Florence,
Nov. 15, 1850.

I have to thank my ever dearest Henrietta for two welcome letters. It was most kind to write two, and this is not the first time that she has done for me more than I deserved. . . . God bless you, my dear, dear Henrietta, you and yours, into all the forms of happiness—Indeed you are gay people, you and Surtees, but I don't envy you in the least going out to dinner in the cold—no, indeed. Robert and I think it rather a bore—that is we are *apt* to think it rather a bore—when visitors come to our tea table and break up our evenings! But as to going out to dinner—it makes my blood run the wrong way to think of it. We have fires now, though the weather is lovely for November, and I take long walks every day. We have fires now, and as soon as the lamp comes, Robert sits in his arm chair, and I curdle myself up on the sofa, or perhaps on a cushion on the hearth, and we say to one another:

" Oh, how delightful this is! I do hope nobody will come

* Sketch of face with two vast black eyes.

to-night "—and so, we read, and talk, and Robert can't keep from letting out the end of Copperfield, and I scold him and won't hear a word more. Then the door opens, and enter Baby holding by Wilson's finger.

" I can't think what he wants," says Wilson, " but he *would* come." Upon which he walks straight up to me and puts up one foot, pointing to it with his hand, and pulling at my gown—perhaps you don't know what that means, but I do. He wants to go to bed, and that I should go and pull off his shoes and stockings, which is my duty every evening, kissing the little feet afterwards. So I get up and go away with him and Wilson, and Robert calls after us :

" Come back soon, Ba." And I go back soon—and at eight o'clock we have our tea-supper, a new complex meal of ours. We used, you know, to have coffee at five, and supper afterwards ; but at Siena we put the two things together and found that it answered delightfully. A table cloth is laid, and we have tea and I have an egg, and Robert has either that, or ham, or a devilled leg of a turkey, something of that sort, and fruit : and we are generally more hungry then than at any other hour of the day.

. . . Where did uncle Hedley decide on going at last ? The Bevans I never by any chance hear of. I wonder how he feels about the R.C. irruption of Bishops. Forgive me, all you dear tractarian people, but you are the cause of this—you did it all, you in England and in Italy—for the Tractarian English in Italy may be called Legion. I am afraid the party feeling, stirred up now in England, salt with the saltness of religious differences will poison all our lips for long. Does Arabel write often to you ? so often that I have need to be jealous at all ? Because I can be jealous, I may tell you. May God bless and keep you, dearest Henrietta and Surtees.

Robert's love with that of your ever attached

Ba.

31

Henrietta's first-born—Uncertain plans—Love of one's children—"Pen" a little spoilt—Snobbish travellers—"Pen's" companions—The Peytons at Florence.

The child was named Altham Surtees. The anxiety about him was that he was born with a slight lump on his head. The doctor wanted to cut it out; but the parents insisted on a second opinion. The distinguished surgeon, Mr. Stone, laughed at the idea of the knife; the damage was transitory and soon disappeared.

The Peytons, already mentioned as Herefordshire neighbours, visited Florence in the early months of 1851.

The Brownings did not affect to conceal their love for their child. A year earlier than this—February 18th, 1850—Mrs. Browning writes: "Frankly . . . we have caught up our parental pleasure with a sort of passion" (Letters I, 436).

Florence,
March 4, 1851.

My beloved Henrietta,

May God bless you and yours with every blessing He blesses with. I cannot tell you how I was affected in reading Arabel's story of your child and the anxieties of which it has been the subject. I could not keep back the tears as I read it, seeing you take the last look of him as Surtees carried him away to Mr. Stone, feeling how you must all have felt in your different degrees. Oh, may God be thanked for His goodness.

I am not going to send you this letter to-day. Only I begin it to-day because I must say something—must say that I think of you and love you. God bless you, and keep fast within your hands all the gifts He has given you lately. Isn't it strange how dear these small creatures become suddenly to us? I used to be tormented about mine, whenever he lay in his cradle too long without moving. I used to say: "Do go and look at that baby."

It came into my head that perhaps he might have died quietly—who could tell? He didn't seem to have got deep

enough into life, in those early days, to be at all safely alive.*

March 22. How disgraceful to have kept this letter by me so long without finishing it. The fact is, we have been so tossed about in perplexities and doubts of various sorts that I scarcely knew in what manner to write. We thought at one time we had let our apartment to the Princess de la Tremouille, but she did not like to be bound for six months at least, and we could not allow her to have it for less. If we don't let the rooms, we must give them up I suppose ; and there will be great vexation and fuss attending this—taking down and packing up the furniture while we are in the house—and to doubtful ends after all. You see what is clear is that we must go to Rome next month, and afterwards, perhaps, to Paris and England. Mr. Kenyon has written us the most kind of letters, saying that he expected to have us in the summer of 1852 at Wimbledon as his visitors. If we go to Paris we certainly shall go to England *this* summer—Arabel may depend on that —and we shall go to Paris if we can. And we shall know more certainties when we get to Rome. My only fear about Paris is about the climate : but to try the experiment is at once right and pleasant, and if we can live so near to England, it will be an infinite blessing for which to be thankful. Dearest Arabel's letter drew my heart into my eyes. Ah, if she could ever fancy that I love her less—that her presence and companionship are less precious to me—what a wrong that would be ! All which I write, my beloved Henrietta, without a word

* There he lay, upon his back,
The yearling creature, warm and moist with life
To the bottom of his dimples,—to the ends
Of the lovely tumbled curls about his face ;
For since he had been covered over-much
To keep him from the light-glare, both his cheeks
Were hot and scarlet as the first live rose
The shepherd's heart-blood ebbed away into,
The faster for his love. And love was here
As instant ! in the pretty baby-mouth,
Shut close as if for dreaming that it sucked ;
The little naked feet drawn up the way
Of nestled birdlings ; everything so soft
And tender,—to the little holdfast hands,
Which, closing on a finger into sleep,
Had kept the mould of 't.

AURORA LEIGH.

of you : but you are going to Germany, and you won't give me a chance even of seeing you this year. Do you know I was half offended that you wouldn't try Paris. We might have taken rooms for you, in the same house with ourselves perhaps, and put in furniture ; and Baby and Altham might have gone out to walk together. Paris is very healthy for children. But I don't *try* even to persuade you, because of course I don't know much about Paris—and your own scheme may be more suitable on every account. Where do you think of going ? Heidelberg, the Peytons think would suit you well : they speak highly of the beauty of the place. Did you ever think of Brussels ? There you would be within a handsgrasp of Paris, and might move to us, if we sent you good tidings, and if you liked to come. Oh, Henrietta, surely we shan't miss one another altogether this year ! I do long to see the darling baby. I do long to put an end to my speculative philosophy about his eyes and nose and mouth, by a face to face view of him. Why, what a great child he must be ! So I judge by traditions. He will be like a son of Anak by the side of my son. Arabel upbraids me for carrying him. Well, I confess to carrying him sometimes, but not often—he likes me to carry him like a baby into his room from this, when he is going to bed—he comes and lays down his head on my knee to show how he is to be carried. But he is not heavy, I am sorry to say—he is a small fairy—only looking much stronger, as everybody cries out, than he used to do—still a delicate little creature as far as looks go. He has two more teeth—now he has eighteen ; and such beautiful minute pearls of teeth, Henrietta. I hope your baby may be *robuster*—because it is pleasanter for a mother to see a child obviously strong—but he can't be really more healthy than mine has been hitherto.

You ask me if the love grows—if it can ever be greater than at first. Oh yes, it grows—it can be greater. Robert said, when he had not been born a day : " I feel as if I could give my life for him already." And I felt the same of course. But then, that is the mere animal instinct awakening—the mere tenderness of protection, and joy of possession. Afterwards comes the individualizing love—when the little creature's

soul develops itself and draws your soul. I don't love my child, now, only because he is my child, but because he is a loving, comprehending, sympathetic child. There is the love of reason, after the love of instinct; and if one is great, the two together must be greater. Of course there is a difference in children; and any stranger who came to know him well would hold him to be peculiarly attractive, I do think. Wilson holds (only Wilson is too much one of us to be a judge) that such a child, before, never was. Though a spoilt child (yes Henrietta) and though used to have everything *his* own way, if he happen to be crossed necessarily—as for instance in not being allowed an open knife to play with—oh, he will shriek, and cry "Ah Di"—but he is never *angry* with the person who denies him—never. Resentment has no part in his nature. Flush licked his arm while he was crying this morning, and he stopped suddenly in the midst of a scream, and looking up to my face (*I* was the wicked person who refused the knife) he laughed in his tears and kissed with his lips in the air to express to me that Flush had just kissed him. So then I kissed him and all was over. . . .

But I ought not to put off all this time, thanking dear Surtees for his letter, which Robert bids me thank him for warmly, and to express the pleasure it gave to both of us.

Mrs. —— ——, and the Miss —— have returned from Naples and Rome. They seem to have been eating and drinking Gold and silver. They like Florence, after all their expenses, better than any other place, and are settled here for two months—after which they go to England through Germany and the Tyrol. Robert helped them to an apartment here, and they seemed perfectly satisfied at first. On the third day enter Mrs. —— —— "tout éplorée"—with dishevelled wits, if not hair. Being intensely English she had taken it into her head that the "situation was not *comme il faut*." Robert explained to her as well as he could that every part of Florence was "*comme il faut*,"—that we had no East and West End, and that the situation of her apartment was considered particularly desirable from its nearness to the Casino—"But — Mr.

Browning would forgive her—would the *English Minister* return her card in that particular situation ? "

I thought Robert would have lost patience altogether. Upon my word, some of the English are too English for anything. She is an amiable, pleasing woman too, and has got over those troubles wonderfully, and (what must help her) her little girl has regained all the health and strength she brought her to Italy in search of. A nice little girl, not yet four years old, whom our child has received into friendship, though she only understands English. He has another small friend who only understands French—he himself understanding nothing but Italian. If you ask him if he knows English, he shakes his head and says " no, no," with a magnificent air. He *can* say " no " now.

Reynolds Peyton has had an attack and is pulled down much, they say : he is very imprudent, and faces the wind too arrogantly. He is well again, however. Poor Mrs. Peyton is looking forward " like a child," she tells me, " to May, because the May after will approach her to home." They all persist in declaring that they like Florence extremely, but I suspect that it is rather because they conscientiously wish to adapt themselves to circumstances, than from any spontaneous feeling. Reynolds studies drawing, and the girls take lessons in Italian and music : but they all seem to me a little sad.

Oh, there's no room—Henrietta, kiss your darling for me, give Robert's and my love to Surtees, and ever believe me,

Your most tenderly affectionate

BA.

32

On the way to England—Advantages of Paris—The Tennysons—R. B. and ladies' caps.

Paris,
July 21, 1851.

MY DEAREST HENRIETTA,

Perhaps you will have heard from Arabel by this time that we only await a letter from her to set out for England.

Arabel has taken a sitting and bed-room for us, with another bed-room for Wilson and baby, at two pounds a week. It will do perfectly for us for a short time as we only want a sort of mouse-hole to hide in, in London—but how dear England is to be sure ! For the same sum, we can have here a beautiful apartment *au premier* in the most fashionable situation in Paris —four best bedrooms, sitting room, dining room, kitchen, and servant's bedroom close by—all most elegantly and luxuriously furnished—every sort of spring sofa and chair, for instance. I hear one can live for almost nothing, if one knows how to set about it, at S. Germains and places of that sort. But we want to try Paris, and try it to advantage. You must come to Paris, and we will settle you close to us this winter. My very dearest Henrietta, *your* good must still be my good. Meanwhile, you mustn't of course think of London. Perhaps we may contrive something—who knows ? I long to see the darling—not to say your own beloved face—not to say, my new brother, Surtees, not to say, how comfortable you have both made your rooms.

Tennyson has been here to call on us—he is in Paris for four days on his way to Florence !—how vexatious. He asked us to go and have tea with him at his hotel close by—and I (though tired half to death with the Louvre) rose up from the sofa in a decided state of resurrection, and acceded at once. We went—and were gratified—charmed by the kindness of the reception from himself, his wife, and his sister and her husband. Nothing could be warmer, nothing more pleasant. The day after he and his wife called again, and we (not being at home) called on them. He had Robert's poems with him, and had been reading them aloud the previous evening. We were all friends at once ; and really he was more than a friend, for he pressed on us the use of his house and two servants at Twickenham as long as we stayed in England, and even wrote a note (insisting that we should take it) to his servants, to the effect that they should give up possession to us forthwith. We took the note—it is an autograph at once of genius and kindness. How few ordinary men would have acted so ! For, observe, he had met Robert only twice or thrice in his life at London

dinners and soirées. There had been no previous friendship. We are both pleased and touched to the heart. Mrs. Tennyson is a very sweet person—with a soft winning manner, and the gentlest of smiles. Such friends we are, that we kissed one another (she and I) at parting—yes indeed. "Ah, Ba is so fond of kissing." But it wasn't Ba who made the first movement towards kissing: it was Mrs. Tennyson, observe.

And, do you know, Robert made me go to that momentous tea-drinking without anything on my head—I mean, with only my hair. He had set himself, for ever so long, against my poor little caps; and after a revolutionary scene at Florence (besides various *émeutes*) I promised to do as he liked when I got to Paris. So he claimed the promise accordingly, and I had to yield; and have caught only a *small* cold as a consequence. My hair grows again somehow—it's indefatigable hair; and Wilson declares it's as thick as ever still. . . .

Your ever attached

Ba.

33

Meeting expected—London friends.

The Brownings reached London at the end of July, and stayed two months in rooms at 26, Devonshire Street, conveniently near Arabel in Wimpole Street.

26 Devonshire Street,
Devonshire Place, London,
Thursday, July [31 ?], 1851.

My dearest Henrietta,

I had your letter to George Street yesterday, and was digging out the mystery of it with a palpitating heart, when another arrives to confirm me in my hope—You are really coming to London! How grateful I am to *both* of you, for your great kindness. How happy, happy, happy, I shall be to see you, Henrietta, and dear Surtees, and your darling—which is mine also.

We can get lodgings for you on a first floor, (close by), Arabel thinks. Then we should all be together, and have a joy rounded to perfection.

I write in the greatest haste—I am confounded with the confusion of London—overwhelmed with kindnesses—suffocated almost. I take half a cup of tea or coffee, morning and evening, and then am sure to be interrupted by somebody. We dined at dear Mr. Kenyon's the day before yesterday (but I have vowed to dine nowhere else), and met Barry Cornwall, Carlyle, Forster of the Examiner, Chorley of the Athenæum, Mrs. Jameson and others. Mr. Forster *told* me he liked me, which was satisfactory! Write and tell us if we shall take rooms for you or not. We are near Arabel, and shall stay here while we are in England. Arabel looks very well, I think; and is the dearest and darlingest, just as she always was. It was great joy to me to have her with me, to look in her face, dear thing! Shall I look in yours on Saturday? What a dream indeed! Write directly—Arabel sits by me while I scribble this distractedly.

Your own affec^te^

BA.

34

Grateful for her visit—The nursery tie—The Barretts going to the country—Delight in having seen Henrietta.

26 Devonshire Street, London,
Aug. 21, 1851. *Thursday.*

MY OWN DEAREST HENRIETTA,

If you knew how I have thought of you and loved you, and thanked you and dear Surtees in my heart for the proof of love you gave me in coming to London! I would have written, not now for the first time, to say this, but Arabel will have told you of my dreadful state of slavery with my little boy hanging to the skirts of my garment whatever way I turn. These words are blotted in the utmost haste—and he climbs up on the table to put an early end to them. A very good child he is, but most exacting. Nobody can beguile him into going out to walk without me, and I have had to give up every sort of religious and social duty, to my great discredit with the public generally. He sleeps with me, eats with me—and only I am permitted to wash and dress him. Really it is

too much sometimes, and I have learnt the use of Wilson in my case.

And your darling is well. So glad I am! but I could not fancy he was going to be ill. A wonderful child he certainly is —everybody wonders at him and I as much as any one. Kiss him for me "three times three" as Tennyson says—and indeed I myself know as far as that in the multiplication table.

. . . Dearest dear Henrietta, when I go, I shall live a long time on thoughts of having seen your beaming face—a happy face, thank God. It was great blessing to look on you and yours; and the perfume of you will last to me for hours and days and weeks and months. Nay, it need not last so long this time—for I shall see you again, it seems to me, soon. I have a sort of presentiment, do you know, of having you in Paris this winter. If you can't come, it will be for the most excellent of reasons, and one to which even I will accede delightfully—we shall see. You could know nothing of baby, as you saw him in a lightning-flash: but you will when you come to Paris, and we can take long breaths and talk.

Do write to me, my dearest dearest Henrietta, you who can, to me who can't—for this is no letter—nothing but a scratch.

Give my love to Surtees, and thank him earnestly for his kindness in agreeing to the London movement. I regard him as my brother, tell him—and well I may.

To-night—or rather at six this evening—we go to Trippy's, on account of baby, who sticks to me like a burr—rose as he is. "White rose," you will suggest. But really he has much more colour now than when you saw him. Also my cough has retreated with the retreating east wind, and I am better altogether.

God bless you, dearest Henrietta. Do write, and love me always

as your most attached

Ba.

35

Busy days in London—Visit to Rogers—A glimpse of her old home—No holiday for Arabel—Carlyle travels with them to Paris—Lodgings described—Why not come also ?—Arabel's character—Happy remembrance of their meeting—Possibilities of Paris : London climate impossible.

Apropos of this journey in Carlyle's company, she wrote to Mrs. Jameson (Letters II, 25) :—"It is difficult to conceive of a more interesting human soul, I think. All the bitterness is love with the point reversed. He seems to me to have a profound sensibility—so profound and turbulent that it unsettles his general sympathies. Do you guess what I mean the least in the world ? or is it as dark as my writings are of course ? "

Paris,
Monday, Oct. 6, 1851.

My very dearest Henrietta,

At last I begin to do my duty to you—duty and pleasure—for I long to get nearer to you, indeed, than I have been, anyhow except in love, for ever so many weeks. But Arabel has written all to you, and your goodness has understood the sort of dismal confusion I have been whirled about in all this time, scarcely knowing whether head or foot was uppermost, or pain or pleasure stronger. When Wilson came back and relieved me of my darling child, (who stuck to me like a little old man of the mountain every moment of her absence) the accumulated engagements attendant on this long engagement at home broke on me. I had to go here and there in all directions, and see and write and talk till I was out of breath. Robert and I put above twenty letters in the post the day before we left London.

Of the two last of our evenings in London, we spent one with Mr. ——, and one with Mr. Rogers. I confess I grudged both away from my dearest Arabel—even the one with Rogers, who is confined to his arm chair from the consequence of his accident a year ago and is besides nearly ninety. He wished to see me, and we couldn't refuse, of course, his age and position generally, being so precarious. His countenance and

manner were most benign, and we brought away with us very pleasant impressions.

But the very last melancholy packing-up evening, Arabel stayed with us, and so did Trippy. I was glad when all that was over. The next morning was bad enough, to drive through Wimpole Street and look up at the house.—Arabel's room is very comfortable—the most cheerful in the house, I think. As to the drawing-rooms, they seemed to me smaller and darker, somehow, and the furniture wanted fitness and convenience, and *bachelor*-looking the general effect was. So grieved I am at their not going out of town, for Arabel's sake, to whom change of air is really necessary once a year. And a universal cleansing seemed as necessary for the house. Only there's no chance of their going now, I much fear.

Did she tell you that Carlyle travelled with us to Paris? he put off his journey a day that he might do so, and we had a delightful journey, except the sea-part which was horrible. Eight hours in such a stormy rolling sea, we had, and everybody was ill, even I and Baby and *Flush*—who was ordered off the deck on purpose, poor dog. As to baby, he rather liked it, and rose in conscious dignity when he had used the basin—never cried once, the whole day, though he might well have been frightened at the roaring wind and waters: and lay still just as I "advised" him, for seven hours together. He is certainly the most reasonable of children. Poor Wilson suffered dreadfully, and so did Robert in a less degree. But my illness and Baby's was of the slightest kind. It was disgrace enough for me to have been affected at all, I think.

Paris is very full, pressed down and running over; and we have had great difficulty about apartments, because you see, in order to please Mr. Kenyon, and to be near his hotel, we did our utmost to get them near the Madeleine, where they are the fewest in number and dearest on account of that paucity. Then our own requirements are not few—we wanted a sunny south aspect, and a third sitting room for Robert to write in, and two good bedrooms for ourselves and Baby, besides one for a servant; and we did not wish to go up too high in a house for these things, although fourth and fifth floors are considered

rather desireable in Paris. My chest is not fit for daily exertions of the kind. So, at last we had to give up the Madeleine, and go off to the Champs Elysées, which is expensive too in its way—but somewhat less so—there are more apartments to be let there, which makes it cheaper in spite of the excellence of the situation. We found a very nice apartment on a second floor to suit us exactly, bathed in the sun and comfortably furnished, with a large Terrace, and beautiful view upon the great avenue, and for this we pay two pounds a week. Paris is full, and the six months we take it for, constitute "the season." Henrietta, there is an apartment above ours in the same house—a sitting room and three bedrooms, or a sitting room and dining room and two bedrooms (I forget which) with a kitchen—very small, but pretty, and with a magnificent view from the windows, to be let for one pound a week. What do you think of coming over and settling in it? Think of this, you and Surtees. . . .

My dearest darling Arabel, how I miss her! Ah—you know *that*, Henrietta. Never was there diviner Christian self-abnegation than glorifies her inner and outward life! Robert loves her as she deserves; and I love her better than I ever did. Oh, that we could catch her away to live with us here. That's what I should rejoice in above most joys.

Do write to me, beloved Henrietta, and tell me every little thing about yourself, Surtees, and the baby. Remember we are to write to one another now, and you are not to fail if I do not. I think still gratefully of the vision I had of you (through the supernaturalism of Surtees' kindness) in London, and wish I had been worthier of it, more able to enjoy it at the time. My cough grew better after *that*, and then worse again, and then better and then worse again—I never lost it entirely, and, the last night, couldn't sleep for coughing. Now, it has almost vanished. The air here is quite different, clear as crystal and glittering in sunshine for the most part. We have a most decided advantage over England as to climate certainly, and I do hope it may be found possible for me to live here without going further south. As to England, I know I should be as ill as ever if I stayed there—it's a climate not tenable really.

Will you write ? Will you believe that I love you dearly, dearly, dearly ? God bless you, and turn all to good as He can. Carlyle paid 22 shillings for his journey (first class) from London to Paris. Think of Paris. Do. We go on the tenth, friday next, to our new apartment, 138 Avenue des Champs Elysées.

Robert's best love to you both with that of

Your dearly attached

BA.

36

Life in Paris : a visit hoped for—The Hedleys call—Lady Elgin's reception — Arabel goes out of London — Arlette suffers from a " splendid " fellow-traveller.

The visit to Lady Elgin, further described in the next letter, was the beginning of a very warm friendship, and after she was stricken with paralysis, R. B. used to read poetry to her (Letter 75). Kinnersley was the home of Uncle John Graham-Clarke.

138 Avenue des Champs Elysées, Paris,
Oct. 29, 1851.

MY BELOVED HENRIETTA,

May God bless you and comfort you both, and set your feet in the sunniest of straight ways.

And now for Paris. What you object to is very reasonable, and dear as the joy would be of having you in this house with me, I will urge nothing at all. You know best and will decide best. . . .

How I shall surprise you by telling you with whom we were talking of you in this room yesterday.—Guess.—

With aunt Jane, uncle Hedley, and Ibbet. Oh, they astonished me so and made my heart turn round in its place, by the sudden sight of them ! They had heard from Arlette (whom by the way I have not yet seen) of our address, and came to us straight. They had been three weeks in Paris, and somebody told them we had gone to Versailles—some inventive person ! Yes, and they have come to live in Paris—in their old apartment in the Faubourg S. Honoré—which they are furnishing at leisure—for they have brought their furniture from Tours and given it up for ever, to aunt Jane's immense delight. Of course I am very glad indeed. Ibbet

looks as if she were just born out of roses—so fresh and lovely and innocent. She told me that she would have liked to go to England, but accepts Paris joyfully in exchange for Tours. Aunt Jane looks well but much older than when I saw her last, I think. You know *that* was six years ago—a long while. Still as everybody in England looked to me rather younger than when I left them, six years can't mean much after all. And she had preserved her beauty so wonderfully up to six years ago. Yet she looks well, with that sweet smile!

Where do you think we are going to-night? To a "reception" at Lady Elgin's. You see I shan't be able to go out at night much later in the year. Aunt Jane tells us it is one of the "best houses" in Paris, she knows her well; and that we are likely to meet various of the french "celebrités" there—which was just our reason for going. She wrote me the kindest note—nothing could be kinder—asking us to "her mondays," and to this monday in particular. She receives from eight to twelve. We shall go at half past nine, and stay an hour perhaps. One dresses up to the throat, as in Italy, but with the head bare, they tell me.

Oh, I forgot to tell you, if you come, you must bring your own household linen and silver. Our plate we feared the custom house, about, and left behind: but they are to be sent to us through the Rothschilds, somehow. . . .

So very glad I am that Arabel is gone *anywhere* from London, though I would not choose Kinnersley for her or myself. . . . Think of poor Arlette having to pay at the custom house for two shawls which had been in her possession five years! It was a disadvantage to her to be in company with Mrs. Davidson who travels, it is said, with a "splendid wardrobe." You know that they are on their way to Florence.

. . . God bless you both. Robert's love to Surtees, with mine. My cough I may speak of as *vanished*. The climate does beautifully so far, but the time of trial has not come.

We have not had fires yet. Kiss Baby for me tenderly and tell me all about him. Love me, my beloved Henrietta, and believe how I love you from the roots of my heart.

Your attached BA.

37

Rooms and cheap living in Paris—Lady Elgin's reception—The Hedleys—Fashions for mother and child.

As in the preceding letter, Aunt Jane is Mrs. Hedley, and Ibbet her youngest daughter. Sette is E. B. B.'s brother Septimus.

Paris,
Nov. 2, 1851.

My beloved Henrietta,

I shall slip this little sheet into Arabel's letter just to speak about Paris and to answer some of your questions. It seems to me most judicious to put off the experiment of coming here. Also, the apartment I spoke to you of is taken by *the month*, and we were unfortunate enough to miss it by half an hour's overlateness. Perhaps it may be vacant in another three months—or if not, we can certainly take rooms for you in the neighbourhood. Rely on us. I think I rather *under* than overstated—You and Surtees, who are much better managers than we are, may live very moderately; and the advantage is that you have luxuries and opportunities of society in a way perfectly impossible at any part of England—carriage-hire for instance, and access to the best people in a conventional point of view. Everybody, almost, receives on one evening of the week from eight till twelve, and a cup of infinitesimally weak tea is the extent of hospitality. Lady Elgin was prodigal and gave us bread and butter: but that was an exception. You wear white gloves, and your hair is neatly dressed—gowns up to the throat. There's no fuss, and it all seems pleasant enough; and for half a crown, you can go in a closed carriage *to and fro* to the extreme end of Paris, including a generous gratuity to the coachman. . . . Altogether I am persuaded, and so is Robert, that it is possible to live here very cheaply, if one knows how to set about it. I wish I were as sure of the climate, but for the last few days it has taken to be very cold, and I am shut up for the present, feeling my throat by no means comfortable. The Hedleys are very kind indeed, coming here constantly—and this is the kinder, that they have been much engaged by upholsterers—they are furnishing their

apartment. It is a most comfortable apartment, on a second floor, and will be beautiful I dare say when the furnishing is complete—which almost it must be, for we were invited there yesterday evening, only we dared not go on account of the cold. I can just walk to see them—it is the limit of my walking capacity. *I* think that Ibbet is like aunt Jane, and Robert thinks not—you shall decide.

Now let me see as to "fashions." Yes, I have bought a bonnet—of drawn maroon satin, trimmed with velvet of the same shade, with purple flowers inside—it's pretty, even Robert grants, (he is so particularly critical about my bonnets), and, as I was imprudent enough to buy it at a shop in a fashionable situation, I gave sixteen shillings for it. Then I have bought a winter gown—very pretty—I have a black merino polka for the morning. Cloth is fashionable, they tell me, and I happily brought with me, from London, a black cloth wadded polka, for out of doors, which is just as it should be. The dress maker who makes my gown, tells me that it must be made with a *point behind*—that's the novelty of the season—of course with a point before, too! Also, they wear a good deal basque dresses—that is—you understand?

As to Altham, he must be perfect. I wanted to give my boy a black hat when he was about Alt's age, do you know, but when we tried it on, it seemed to crush the little face—the white felt did much better. And now we have bought him a white felt hat, white satin ribbons and feathers—really the prettiest hat I ever saw, and he looks lovely in it—with a trimming of blue satin ribbon inside at each cheek. Then he wears trowsers now!—that is out of doors. Such ridiculous tiny trowsers up to his knees: and long white knit gaiters. It's a beautiful costume, and he is much admired, I assure you. People stare at him, Wilson says, and turn round to stare again. Aunt Jane thinks he is like Sette and there *is* something in the smile! You will admit, when you see him, that he is much improved, though your baby of Anak will always make him appear fragile in comparison. . . .

O wise Surtees not to send satires to newspapers!! It would have been dangerous. God bless Baby and both of you

—Robert's love with mine to Surtees and your dear self. Write to me and ever love me, dearest dearest Henrietta, as your most lovingly attached

BA.

38

Paris on the eve of the coup d'état—Climate—I love Italy, and like Paris—Society—Robert sometimes goes out—Visit from Lady Elgin and Mme. Mohl—Has no alarm about the situation—Reviews of their books.

There is more about the coup d'état in the next letter. It began, at least, quietly enough.

The famous Madame Mohl (1793–1883), *née* Mary Clarke, was of English birth, but French education. Her long association as a young woman with Madame Récamier no doubt taught her how to keep a successful "salon" in Paris, as she did for forty years. In 1847 she married the orientalist Julius Mohl.

Mr. Justice Talfourd is best remembered by his memoirs of Lamb and his tragedy of "Ion," apart from his legal and Parliamentary work. E. B. B.'s poem so praised by the Italian, was "Casa Guidi Windows." R. B.'s essay on Shelley was written as foreword to a collection of twenty-five letters by the poet. These soon afterwards were discovered to be spurious, and the book was withdrawn.

138 Avenue des Ch. Elysées, Paris,
Dec. 1, 1851.

MY EVER DEAREST HENRIETTA,

So you and Surtees are not at all afraid of the disturbances in Paris, only of the expense of running away from them. I understand. Ah, but, seriously, if you wait till there shall be no prospect of a row here, you may wait fifty years—these stormy elements will not assuage themselves easily. Robert says you are wise—only, if you are wise, we are foolish—for so far from thinking of going away, we are meditating a settlement. We do not bind ourselves in any way. We may even go to Italy for a year. We can't give up our travelling vocation. As to the climate, I won't say much about it so far. The cold has been universal, you see. . . . Everyone

assures us that it is exceptional weather, and people have lived here eight years without feeling it so cold. Therefore one must be reasonable and wait. I have not suffered from it nearly as much as might have been expected, I assure you. The cough was occasionally rather tiresome, and I grew thin as I always do in cold weather—but I never was unwell as in England in august—never. The air is of a different quality from the English air—that is certain ; and I breathe and live in it much better. Then we have a warm house, and keep up enormous fires, and we have no passages or staircases to catch one's death in. I don't compare it at all to dear Italy. I love Italy, and like Paris—there's the difference. . . . We have tickets for the Institute on saturday week, and I shall be in despair if I can't get there. As it is, I have had to give up the Chamber of Deputies, both for myself and Robert, who wouldn't go there without me. . . .

I like Paris very much ; and people are inclined here to be over-kind to us, I see, rather than the contrary. We don't want a crowd of visitors, Henrietta,—that isn't what I call society—and then the English might be a little troublesome perhaps. I have never been able to go out in the evening except twice : but I make Robert go sometimes, because we might as well be at Florence if he shuts himself up here as he does sometimes for days together. To go out for an hour in the evening gives him opportunities of social intercourse, which really is good for him, with his temperament. I quite agree with you, Henrietta. We had Lady Elgin here a few evenings ago. Lady Elgin and Mad^me^ Mohl together—and a great long talk about Shelley and the poets generally. It was their own proposition to come, and we gave them tea and bread and butter, Henrietta, and Désirée made them a cake, and they liked it, they said, and meant to come again soon. . . .

The newspapers must make our situation here seem tremendous, but nobody in Paris, except M. Thiers, has been very particularly frightened as yet, and although it is a moment of crisis doubtless, we shall all survive it, be sure. Where is the danger, as long as one stays in the house ? In these Champs Elysées, they could only hear the sound of the cannons at a

distance, in the last revolution. I am not in the least frightened. Not nearly so much as I should be at a thunderstorm.

Mr. Justice Talfourd has been printing a very flattering sonnet to Robert in the Household Words. And the Florentine review (Italian) has been praising my last book in an unwise manner I fancy—lifting to the skies my " politics and poetry," Henrietta, (! !) as a " poema stupenda." Robert has finished and is sending off his Shelley, and I am about to prepare a third edition of my poems, which is likely to be called for soon. We don't mean to idle away our time in Paris—oh no.

Your ever attached

BA.

39

The coup d'état from close at hand—Even the baby was out that day —The child's point of view.

A further detail of the " Fighting Thursday " is given in the next letter.

138 Avenue des Ch. Elysées, Paris,
Sunday and Monday, Dec. 13 *and* 14, 1851.

MY DEAREST HENRIETTA,

I have your letter and write in great haste to assure you that we are neither shot nor frightened to death. I had taken for granted, your hearing from George, to whom I wrote all particulars. Perhaps they thought in Wimpole Street that my letter was not re-assuring, and so kept it to themselves. All of you in England exaggerate the state of affairs. A crisis was imminent, the whole world knew ; and we have expected the culminating point week after week—though of course without any definite expectation of what actually came. *Don't believe the Times.* To talk about " carnage " is quite absurd. The people never rose—it was nothing but a little popular scum, cleared off at once by the troops—Painful of course—very full of pain, of course—for the time !—terrible to hear the sound of the cannon in the distance, and to feel that it was frenchman against frenchman ! That thursday night, I could not make up my mind to go to bed till nearly one o'clock. I

undressed and then sate up with Robert in my dressing gown, while I did some writing. On friday, scarcely a stroke was attempted. And on saturday, Robert and I drove down to the scene of conflict, and examined the houses with great holes in them, and the windows broken in. There was a great crowd, but all was perfectly tranquil—and Paris, generally, looked as if nothing had been the matter. On sunday, the theatres were all full, (to say nothing of the churches) the Parisians keeping holiday as usual.

To prove to you that we have not been alarmed here. Baby was taken out to walk even on that dreadful thursday—I said the other day to aunt Jane :

" Did the notion of leaving Paris ever cross your mind ? "

" Not for a moment," said she.

My dearest Henrietta, what really *would* frighten me, would be the thought of going to London in January—Thank you. I choose Louis Napoleon's cannons rather.

It will be found I think, that the majority of the people go with him, and that everything will be settled on a firm basis for some time. It's as much as can be said of any situation in France at any period.

. . . As to the revolution, Louis Napoleon himself can't be more delighted with it than our child has been. In fact the entrance of the troops into Paris that 2d of December was very grand—the military music and the shouting of the people, as the president rode under our windows, the manœuvring of the splendid cavalry, the white horses, glittering helmets, all that " pomp and circumstance," might well move older children than our babe. He was in the most enthusiastic state of effervescence, screaming and shouting out to the soldiers. You know he is a most excitable child at all times. We did what we could to prevent him from being frightened, too. Yet he was aware every now and then that something was wrong, and, particularly when it grew dark, he used to try to impress upon us (and upon himself, poor darling) that the " *babuffs* " (the soldiers) were " buoni," and had gone to bed, and wouldn't do " *boom.*" Yes—and he had dreams. He starts up now in his sleep sometimes, and cries out against the " babuffs "

who are naughty he says—"tativi" [Italian, cattivi, bad]. But he admires them with all his soul's admiration—and he sets himself to coax one to buy him a "hat like a soldier" with a red feather—"penna *vass*"—white—the English word *white* representing *colour* to his mind, and standing, in this phrase, for *red*. He has made friends with a little Russian princess, a month younger than himself and "pays her great attention" says Wilson. . . .

I won't write a longer letter, that you may not have to wait for it. Kiss the babe for me ten times at least and love me dearest Henrietta as

Your ever and ever affectionate

BA.

40

New Year's greetings—Paris as usual—The coup d'état not as represented in the *Times*—The Hedleys prefer Paris to Tours—Vain wishes and black puddings—The child's outing on the "fighting Thursday"—A deep-sounding word.

The Rev. Richard Butler, Uncle Richard, as has been noted already, had married E. B. B.'s aunt.

Black puddings refer to the fairy story of the old couple and the three wishes.

Paris,
Jany. 5, 1852.

MY BELOVED HENRIETTA,

I can't let the year pass from its first days without saying a word of love to you and sending a token of the affectionate wishes which are warm at my heart for you and yours. God bless all three of you, and bring us together in joy, often in the course of the beginning year. God bless the darling from his silver head to his dimpled feet, and bless you both in him, with the sight of his budding life more and more from day to day and month to month. And how have you all spent this Christmas?

As to Paris, I give you up Henrietta! I have no longer the least bit of hope in you. You take in the Times and believe in S. Bartholomew massacres, bloody despotisms, and various

dreadful things of that sort. I say nothing against anything. After all you may like London better, and really it is on my conscience to be the means of diminishing my poor darling Arabel's few holiday hours—the brightest of which might be spent in your society—Oh no—I say nothing. It is best perhaps on the whole that you should go to London.

The Parisians meanwhile are thinking chiefly, it seems to me, of Te Deums, and less solemn fêtes in the street for the "jour de l'an." Robert could scarcely get along the boulevards the day before yesterday, for the fairs and booths and the crowd of gazers and gala-keepers. But we have had some bitterly cold weather, and I have not enjoyed my Christmas as much as my neighbours I must candidly confess. For two days and a half we had fog again last week, mixed up with frost,—and although it was a bright fleecy fog, not like the yellow London monster, I felt it very much indeed. Fogs are rare things in Paris—but the cold, altogether, this year, has been perfectly unusual, every one tells us. Uncle Richard has lived here eight years and felt nothing of the kind, he says; and all witnesses unite in the same asseveration. Unfortunate we have really been. Still, I was out on the tenth of December —out walking—so you may understand how mild it was then and afterwards. Now, too, the weather is brilliant, quite lovely. I must draw the curtains to prevent the sun's putting out the fire, and then open both doors for air. This house is peculiarly warm, and on the least temptation is apt to grow over-warm. But I can't venture to leave it, let the weather be ever so mild, just at present I must take care of myself and get back my voice, for I have suffered a rude "coup de pistolet" in the cold we have escaped from. . . .

Aunt Jane and Ibbit were at Miss Fitton's that evening, besides the governess and little girls. Robert admired Ibbet—thought her looking very handsome. Aunt Jane had been dining out at some English house. She was here yesterday and told me that they had not been at all "gay" but were about to be so—were to begin by going to "two balls this week." Robert has not met her once at Lady Elgin's. She told me that uncle Hedley "*had at last forgiven her for forcing*

him to leave Tours" . . . an act of resolution on which she more and more congratulates herself, as Paris agrees with him infinitely better—he required, she says, lighter air and more society. He is well and appears perfectly consoled. Also they are delighted with their apartment. Robin has gone back to Dublin.

January 6.

Dearest dear Henrietta, how glad I am that I was too late for the post with this letter yesterday. Now I have yours, and can answer it, not crosswise—thank you!

Dearest Henrietta, I don't accuse you of "cowardice"—only of—timidity. I don't think by any means that you are afraid of Louis Napoleon's swallowing Altham at a mouthful—you are simply, as you say, afraid of having to run away—or of being sent away, which would be "an enormous expense"—well, I can't answer for Mrs. Robert Martin's "friends"—or what they may have done to be "treated roughly"—or what being "treated roughly" means—whether it refers to the exact verification of their passports, or the search to the bottom of the portmanteaus for cigars. I can't pretend to guess the head and front of this mystery. But I may assure you, solemnly, that knowing far too much of the English society here, and having heard from every quarter every evil invention and exaggeration against the present state of things, I have not yet heard that the most timid woman thought it, fancied it, or dreamt it, in the possibilities of "the cards," that she should have to run away, or be sent away, or any other tremendous contingency of the kind. Why, my dearest Henrietta, at the time you talked of coming here, *then* was the time of uncertainty. *Then*, we all knew that something must happen, quietly or unquietly, But now,—for the next year or two at least, affairs are settled. The funds are at a hundred and four,—and commerce improving on all sides. As to Paris, it's a city of fairs just now—brilliant with sunshine and gaiety. I just state these facts: but not to persuade you to change your mind by any means. Indeed I do think that Surtees' mother has the first claim, and Arabel the second; and though one must

sigh to give you up, it is far better that *I* should have to sigh than either of those two—So delighted I shall be to hear of you settled in London. As to Somerset, I shall wonder if you go back there for the summer—But summer is a long way off. We shall meet somehow I dare say—perhaps in England—only not in *January*, Henrietta, thank you.

I think I am a little better—the cough vexes me less certainly. As to the voice, with patience, it will make way again. The weather is splendid. I wish we were rich enough to go south every winter for a few months : but one might as well wish for " black puddings," and perhaps as wisely.

. . . . [The baby's] shyness is capricious. He is not afraid of the soldiers for instance, and shouted out " Viva Peone " in at the president's carriage-window the other day.

Also, I must explain that on the aforesaid dreadful thursday —the fighting thursday—Wilson took him out, meaning to keep close to this house. But by degrees, everything being apparently tranquil, they walked towards the end of the Champs Elysées, and it was there that a frightened man, (not a soldier) begged Wilson to turn back for fear of what might happen. Because you see, the streets of Paris are very open, and the cannons come in a sweep. Oh, I am not so mad as to send my child into danger, I can assure you. It was safe enough.

. . . . Alt. is very forward, if he says " mama " meaning it. Our child used to call everybody mama, at his age. What a deep sounding word ! Yes, indeed—it has music. For months and months, my heart used to beat faster at hearing it —and even now, it thrills through me sometimes like the voice of an angel.

Robert likes Paris very much. God bless you all. Robert joins in affectionate wishes—and heaps of kisses to the darling.

Your ever attached,

Ba.

41

A birthday letter—George Sand; a letter and a play—Possible introduction to Lamartine—A sister's duty and kindness.

The pet name for the boy, Peninni, afterwards Penini, Peni, and briefly Pen (L. 95), occurring for the first time in an omitted passage in the previous letter (January 5th, 1852) was a lisping attempt at his own name, Wiedeman.

138 Avenue des Ch. E., Paris,
March 3, 1852.

MY EVER DEAREST HENRIETTA,

God's blessing be with you and brighten the whole year to you and many years beyond this.

I feel as if I had not acted after my heart in not writing to you long since, but you will have heard of me and how I have been anxious about Peninni, and you will have felt that my love for you was incapable of slackening or growing cold, whether I wrote or was silent.

I congratulate you, dearest Henrietta—and Surtees. I congratulate both of you on the good piece of news you sent me. *I* won't condole with either of you whatever long faces you may pretend to get up for the occasion. Not I. Not for financial reasons nor for any other, I assure you. It delights me that your darling should have borne his first reverse of fortune—the weaning—with so much fortitude. Arabel is to write to me a full description of him—and of you, and that will be the next best thing to seeing you, dear things.

[An account of Peninni's illness, recovery and upbringing is omitted.]

Oh Henrietta—you will never guess what I am going to do to-night. I am going (by invitation) with Robert to see the first representation of George Sand's new play at the Gymnase. She wrote me the kindest note possible three days since—here's a part of it which I shall write out particularly for Arabel, because Arabel thinks she isn't kind :—

" Je ferai mon possible pour vous envoyer une loge, mais on en donne tant aux journalistes et si peu à l'auteur, que je

suis forcée de prévoir le cas où je n'aurais que deux fauteuils à vous offrir. Vous en contenteriez vous ? ou préferiez vous une loge pour la seconde représentation ? Un mot de réponse.

" À vous de cœur, ainsi qu'à monsieur Browning

" George Sand."

Of course we had expected nothing of the sort, and the acceptance was not to be doubted of. I told her in my answer that though I had been nowhere out of the house during the winter, I could not resist the temptation she offered me, and that we would gladly accept the two chairs. Since then, however, Robert and I talked it over, and agreed that, if the day happened to be cold, I wouldn't " offer myself a sacrifice to idols," not even to George Sand ; and that he should go and take a friend with him in my stead. Happily we have beautiful weather. Yesterday I was out driving on the boulevards for an hour and a half—and to-day there is such a sunshine in addition to the south wind, that I have let down the green curtains, let out the fire, and am sitting in this room with the thermometer at sixty-six, notwithstanding. Also we are to go to see her again next friday. Very soon she leaves Paris.

Lady Elgin is unwell, which delays the introduction to Lamartine. She wishes to take Robert herself, or we would not wait for her—as we hear that Lamartine is " particularly interested about both of us, and desirous of seeing us."

Dearest dear Henrietta, how I yearn to do all the kissing myself, instead of sending this letter to kiss you. I must send it however at once—for I have been interrupted, and shall be too late for the post. God bless you, dearest for ever and ever. Mind you write and tell me about Arabel. That's *your* duty, remember—or your kindness at least.

Love to Surtees. Kisses to the darling. I can't read over. I am in such haste.

Your own attached

Ba.

42

Prospect of another visit to London—George Sand and Pen's comments — Lamartine — Milsand, Buloz, de Musset — The "state of siege" over—Louis Napoleon strongly placed—Mr. Darley—Prefers "characteristic people" to the highborn—Liking for Lady Elgin and her connexion Mrs. Streatfield—New religious topics—Parisian fashions—Friends.

Milsand, as good a scholar in English as in his nativeFrench, was the man to whose discriminating friendship Browning owed so much.

Mrs. Streatfield was the widow of Major Sidney Robert Streatfield, 52nd Light Infantry, by whom she had four children. She married secondly on August 5th, 1852, Captain Henry Francis Cust, 8th Hussars, M.P. for Grantham, by whom she had six children. She died September 14th, 1867.

After the fall of Palmerston and Russell, Lord Derby became Prime Minister in February, 1852, with Disraeli at the Exchequer. The new Secretary at War, from whom Surtees might have hopes, was Beresford.

Richard Butler, "our first cousin," was the ninth baronet, born 1813.

138 Avenue des Ch. Elysées, Paris,
April 1, 1852.

My very dearest Henrietta,

I don't like to think of your being in London so long without a direct letter from me, though I repeat to myself that it is much the same thing to whom I write, as you get equally at all I can tell you. But I must tell *you*, especially *you*, that I delight to seem to feel you nearer to me than you seemed in Somersetshire, and that I am longing to hear of your modifying your plans somehow as to your return thither. Won't dear Surtees consider the matter? Couldn't you both simplify your plans by settling in some way, within reach of Wimpole Street, if not immediately there? I *think* we shall be in England this summer—and to have in any measure to lose you, will be grievous indeed. As to April, O Henrietta, April is too soon for me in England—even May is soon for England. You see if I go and have to shut myself up, there's no possible good in it, and it grows disheartening to get so

much evil through England. We have our apartment here until the eleventh of May at least. The plans afterwards, are quite unshaped,—still, every now and then, we let out to one another, that they will end by shaping themselves into England. We say unawares—" *if* we go to England "—" when we go to England." So we shall go, I dare say—and then how to be near you, Henrietta ? I want (among other small reasons) to see Altham the 1st—though I am sure it will be at the price of humiliation on my part, as I expect to see him twice the size of Peninni as usual. Thank God our darling is going on well now. . . . We shall spend next winter in Italy if we live, and bathe him in his native air. It will do us all good. You will all think him looking very well, I do flatter myself, and much grown.

Tell Arabel that George Sand didn't go that day after all, and that we heard accidentally of her being detained by illness. So we went to her house to enquire, and took Wilson and Peninni as usual with us in the carriage. The child listens to everything one says, and I heard him telling Désirée with an indescribable air, while Wilson was tying on his hat :

" Peninni e Papa e Mamma via, Torge And—Torge And no bene. Torge And un poeta, Detite." He talks his Italian to Désirée and she answers him in French, as if it were quite a matter of course ; only she doesn't make out much of his talk, and he understands every word of hers—there's the difference.

Lamartine did not come to see us that day. He could not find us out, and Eugene Pelletan couldn't make time to accompany him—something hindered. But another day is to be fixed. M. Pelletan says he is extremely anxious to come, both on account of our poetry, which he thinks highly of, and the agreeable impression which Robert made on him during the evening they were together.

" He was struck," M. Pelletan told me, by Robert's " elevation of thought."

Robert went with our dear friend M. Milsand (noble and excellent he is) to the house of M. Buloz, the great man of the Revue des deux mondes, where the Parisian literati of the

first order are apt to congregate, last saturday evening, by especial invitation, and was received with great cordiality, and much interested by what he saw and heard. Alfred de Musset who passes with some, as the first living French poet, was to have been there to meet him, but was hindered—another night, he says, he will do it. Paul de Musset, the brother, a very different person, was to be seen in his place. Madame Buloz had the kindness to miss *me*, and to hope that when I was able to go out in the evening she might see me. Every saturday evening they " receive." The " minister of commerce " and his wife were present, but Robert didn't hear much politics.

We are released, you will all see, from the " state of siege " *throughout France*, which since 1849, has not been found possible. The president was warmly received by the people when he went to the Tuilleries to hear the oaths of the constituted bodies ; and there are unmistakeable symptoms everywhere of reviving prosperity. I do not approve of everything—it is not a government after my own heart : but considering the tremendous complications of the position, I believe he has done nearly as well as any other honest and able man could do—Eugène Pelletan, who is of the extreme opposition to the Elysée, admitted the other day to Robert that " things were going better." I liked the President's reception speech—it was frank and bold, and direct—very characteristic. How long any government will stand in France, it is difficult to predicate—but at the present moment he stands strongly—more strongly than ever—and *not* (please the Times and Examiner) by the grace of the army.

Last tuesday evening, which M. Milsand always spends with us, was furthermore animated by a new acquaintance of ours, a Mr. Darley, the brother of Darley the poet, who wrote in the Athenæum. He is very gentlemanly and intelligent, and having spent twenty seven years in France, knows something, as you may suppose, of the country. I am glad to know him. We attain to something by every such new acquaintance. I don't want to see mere masks of men and women. I have been scolding Robert for not bringing me Mr. Jadin the artist, Alexandre Dumas' friend, mentioned in

that pleasant book of travels upon Sicily—I forget its name—and Robert has made Mrs. Streatfield laugh by representing that while for Lord Salisburys and the rest I remain in an absolute state of indifference, I leave him no peace till he gets into acquaintance with all the delightful scamps of feuilletonistes and artists in Paris. Of course not. I want to know characteristic people. We are rather respectable too in some of our society—we can't help that, Henrietta. The wife of the Sardinian minister is coming to call on us, she has signified, and Lady Trotter. Oh, the English are really too many.

I like Lady Elgin and Mrs. Streatfield, far the best of all the English. Mrs. Streatfield, (she was a Miss Cookson—the first cousin of the other Miss Cookson who married our first cousin Richard Butler) is charming—even fascinating—one of the most graceful, elegant creatures, the age ever looked at—and good and intelligent and sympathetical besides. We see a great deal of her. As to Lady Elgin, she is really interesting in many ways—a most earnest enquiring woman—a great spiritualist—deep with the Irvingites, though she has not joined them yet. Oh, I shall have to write a very long theological letter to Arabel before long. I hear much of curious things and interesting things relating to religion, in spite of all my scamps.

Dearest Henrietta, I do hope you don't drag about that Altham of yours. He is to be dressed, the fashion says, even he, in a sort of Basque body—scarcely any one dares to appear out of a Basque—only, in a child's frock, it is fuller—very pretty and becoming. Among maturer persons, the jacket remains much in favour, together with a waistcoat exactly like a man's, which is a good deal worn just now. Robert wants me to have it: but if ever I do it shall be a black silk one, as really I have not courage for the white and bright masculine forms of the costume. Mrs. Streatfield looks very pretty in hers, but she looks pretty in everything. Henrietta, I must tell you that it's considered here utterly barbaric and profoundly English, to wear over-full petticoats. My French Mantuamaker who is distinguished in her class, smiles with

pitiful contempt at the whole tendency—" mais c'est par trop Anglais, Madame."

I heard to-day from Mrs. Martin, who is to come our way in a few weeks she says. No other news for the rest ; but she speaks of you, and wonders whether the new ministry will be more propitious to Surtees than the former one. . . .

Oh—no time to write ! The post goes, they say. Love, best love to Surtees. Love to everybody. Tell dearest Trippy I shall write to her.

As to that wicked Arabel, she treats me—why how she does treat me ! A little tiny note she has sent me—since when ? Robert's love to both of you with mine. A great kiss to the darling.

Your ever attached

BA.

43

A letter to one sister serves for both—Health and prospects of a visit to England—Mrs. Martin—A " brittle " state of health—" Infantine " tastes—Travel an agreeable excitement—Pen and the cows—Lady Elgin and Madame Mohl—Homœopathy.

138, Avenue des Champs Elysées, Paris,
June 10–18, 1852.

MY EVER DEAREST HENRIETTA,

I have really seemed to behave badly to you. Only it always comes into my head that a letter to Arabel is much the same as one to yourself ; and then, lately, I have been less inclined to write than usual, from one cause and another. Now, being better and blither, you shall have me for the whole morning. My dear dearest Henrietta, if you think I have not thought of you through the whole length of my silence, you think very wrong indeed. On the contrary you have been full in my thoughts, you and your baby. I have anxiously hunted the track of you through Arabel's letters. . . .

Talking of England ; dearest Henrietta, I am not behind you the least inch in anxiety about our meeting in London—Why, there's a *necessity* as to our meeting. It would vex me for ever if I missed you ; and I will not, if it depends on me.

At the same time, I must tell you that through my having been particularly unwell this spring, and through the disastrous accounts we receive from everybody in England of the state of the weather, Robert is unwilling to let me go before quite the end of this month or the beginning of next. You see I somehow or other caught cold in May, and though the cold itself was nothing, it stirred up my old symptoms—and I had quite *an attack* after the ancient fashion, which reduced me horribly and made me look even worse than the reality warranted. Poor Robert was annoyed to the quick, by the remarks people made to him about my looking ill. Now I am well again, and people remark accordingly—but the cough is not *quite gone*, nor am I as strong as before—only getting strong, and recovering my appetite and power of moving about. Oh—we were all at the jardin des plantes the other day, inspecting the elephants—so you may suppose that I am well enough. But, you see, Robert is rather more nervous than usual about me still—and certainly the chest may be in too irritable a state to bear with impunity, just immediately, that horrible English climate. While we are shutting the persiennes and opening doors and windows to keep ourselves cool, Arabel writes to me with her feet on the fender. Such splendid days and nights we have had here—the air like crystal, the sunshine streaming in floods! It has been exactly like a Florentine spring; and Peninni is out of doors from morning till night, either on our great terrace, or under the trees in the garden when the sun is too hot, to say nothing of more erratic excursions. He got over his hooping cough victoriously—thank God for all God's mercies, and is now nearly as fat as he was before—looking quite well again; and in the most frantic good spirits.

And now, consider, Henrietta. From your own account you would not yourselves, at any rate, pass through London before the end of the month or the beginning of July. Do, for love's sake, do both of you, dear Surtees and Henrietta, put it off as long as you can, because, so, it will be safest. . . .

Such an affectionate letter I had yesterday from dear Mrs. Martin. She was gratified, it appears, by our reception of

her and Mr. Martin—which was only affectionate and sincere. They are true friends whom I love. . . . She warns me against the excitements of Paris. I was not quite myself when she was here, and grew worse afterwards; and I dare say she saw that I was in a brittle sort of state; and the truth is I am better when quietly not amused a bit. I can't help being excited by one thing and another thing, and then in the midst, I *break*. Though the Paris salons seem very calm, you can't turn your head without seeing or hearing something interesting—and I, you know, have had such a shut-up life, that it is natural I should be more than usually interested. Robert calls me "infantine," because I am always staring in at the shop windows of the world as well as of the boulevards. Then such opportunities of divine music, you have here, Henrietta! But I never could bear going out much in winter or summer—I must be strict with myself and accept moderation in all things. The only sort of excitement which can be said to agree with me is the excitement of travelling, which I do bear wonderfully, considering that I am not strong—I assure you I can bear more in the way of travelling than very many strong women can. It's the continual change of air, I think, which pours in oil as the lamp burns.

Peninni is never done talking now—and it is the best thing possible to hear him talk French to Desirée. . . . He went the other day with Wilson to see the cows milked. A cow lowed tremendously during the operation, and I believe he thought it rather supernatural altogether—for though he kept saying—"Bella e buona, Lili," he couldn't be persuaded either to approach very near or to drink the milk. He explained to me afterwards that he liked milk in tea, and when it was hot, but he didn't like it the other way—"it came in such a questionable shape." Tell me if Alt. says any words yet. He will be more learned in cow-milking and other pastoral matters than my child is. Peninni, however, is an enthusiast in nature, and descants upon the "red trees" (he calls everything red which has any sort of colour) and the "beautiful sun, which God hangs up on a nail"—and on the flowers—he makes drawings

of gardens with trees and rows of flowers—" lolli," (fiori) as he calls them—and he keeps flowers of his own in a tumbler and makes a great fuss about them indeed. . . . God bless you my dear dear Henrietta. Yes, I was quite uneasy about Arabel. You see I have no faith whatever in homeopathy, though it may do very well for delicate persons in a normal state. And then that precious Arabel over-fatigues herself in her works of charity. Kiss darling Altham, and give mine and Robert's best love to Surtees. I have at last written you a letter—almost as long as my silence. I love you dearly.

Your ever attached

BA.

44

Another happy meeting—London friends—Crystal gazing—R. B. returns early from Paris.

As in 1851, so in 1852 the sisters effected a meeting in London. On Henrietta's return to Somerset, letters begin again.

Of the friends mentioned here, Bryan Waller Procter, was poet, biographer of Lamb, barrister, and friend of literary men, who wrote under the pseudonym of Barry Cornwall. Like the Brownings, he received a legacy from Mr. Kenyon. His eldest daughter also, Adelaide Ann, was a poet. She died in 1864, ten years before her father ; her poetry, however, continued its popularity, and in 1877 was reported to be second only to Tennyson's.

Monckton Milnes, writer of prose and verse, and a centre of literary society, afterwards became Lord Houghton. Mrs. Haworth (of Elstree) is probably the mother of the Brownings' friend Euphrasia Frances Haworth (Fanny), whose artistic and poetic gifts early brought her into touch with Robert Browning. Her name appears as " Eyebright " in Sordello. A warm friendship with E. B. B. also began on her 1851 visit to London. They had shared an interest in mesmerism and the " attendant mysteries " of spiritualism and Swedenborgianism.

Welbeck Street, Cavendish Square, London,
July 23, 1852.

MY BELOVED HENRIETTA,

I was delighted and grateful on receiving your dear, welcome letter. Now that you are *gone*, and not *going*, I begin to understand the preciousness of having seen you, almost as well as I did when I first began to see you. But the going was so sad, that it seemed to spoil everything for the time. God bless you and yours, dearest! I did not tell you how much I liked and appreciated Surtees, dear Surtees, and delighted to see you happy together. Give him my love as from a true sister. It was great comfort to both Arabel and me to have news of you—for you looked really unwell that melancholy morning.

I went to Wimpole Street; and I couldn't get to Carlyle's in the evening, which vexed Robert. On wednesday however we were together at the Procters, and had a very pleasant meeting. Monckton Milnes was there, and Mrs. Jameson, and sundry others. Yesterday we broke a vow and *dined* with Mr. Milnes. But it was a five o'clock dinner, and we were to meet nobody except the son of Chevalier Bunsen, the Prussian minister, and a relation of the Milnes's. After dinner Mr. and Mrs. Milnes and ourselves went out to drive in the open barouche, and walked in the beautiful garden of the Alexandrian consul at Kensington. Not unpleasant altogether. Next wednesday we are to go to Mrs. Haworth's to meet Lord Stanhope and his crystal ball, which is some spiritual consolation to me. And this is the extent of our gad-about-edness, so far.

Robert came back from Paris on that very monday at half past six—that is, several hours before I thought of expecting him. Do write and tell me all your arrangements. Give ten kisses for me to the darling. One day he shall pay me back those he refused me, with compound interest. I am writing with—a poker, I was going to say—but it's more after the likeness of a pair of tongs. Robert's best love to you all three with that of your

Ever attached

BA.

45

Busied in London—Henrietta's home—The second child should be a girl—Would like one herself—Mr. Arnold—Procter, Milnes, Kenyon—Kindness of almost strangers.

Mr. Arnold is probably R. B.'s barrister friend and trustee of Letter 10.

Welbeck Street, London,
Aug. 17, 1852.

Just one word to my dearest Henrietta to say that I think of her and love her—because it seems to me that I write very little, which is true indeed. I am giddy with the heaps of things and faces in this London—but thoughts go on the same way as ever, and so do loves, of course.

It delights me to think of you in your own house, of which your description is most pleasant. Whenever I claim my chair, Henrietta, I will give you something as good in the place of it, so it is a reliable chair, pray consider. Your room must be very nice. I think I should be half inclined to adopt your dining room with its windows opening into the garden, as a sitting room. Did you ever think of it? or I would have an outside rustic flight of wooden steps, dropped from the drawing room window into the garden, after the foreign fashion. It would cost you little and be pretty and convenient.

What does Surtees mean by inscribing "Althamus secundus"? Why, I do hope he doesn't contemplate the atrocity of your having a boy. It would be too bad indeed. Take care of yourself, dearest dear Henrietta, and be of sound and tranquil mind, of excellent spirits and courage, and have a little girl as fresh as a Hebe, to confound me with jealousy and covetousness. I am getting the night caps ready, in spite of all outraged feelings; pray understand—tho' Arabel says you won't.

As for me, when she tells you that I am "tolerable" I suppose she means simply "bearable"—not a very complimentary expression I confess, but not calculated to give you any manner of uneasiness. The fact is, I am well, too well, alas! and looking forward to no kind of "trial," as you say.

So much the worse for me—only you need not be unhappy in consequence—oh no.

To-day we dine with the Arnolds. To-morrow we pass the evening at Mr. Procter's. Next day we go in the morning to Monckton Milnes's christening, and at night to the opera. On Saturday we set off for Farnham, and stay till monday. Mr. Kenyon has gone to Scotland. Oh, you are not to fancy that we are whirling down all the circles of an infernal dissipation—only, people are very kind to us, such as are in town—two quite strangers have offered me actually *their carriages*—to be at my disposition—(not accepted of course !) and this kindness forces one to be turning round one's head in various directions—but there has been more to do this week than is usual to us.

Accept this billet, for the billet *which it is*. Full of love, though ! Robert's and my love to Surtees. Kisses to the darling.

Your ever attached

BA.

46

Caps for the desired little girl—Hedleys and others of the family—Sketch of Henrietta's house—Would like to be near her.

58 Welbeck Street, London,
Sept. 16th, 1852.

MY EVER DEAREST HENRIETTA,

How eagerly and anxiously we are waiting for good news from you ! The rest of the caps shall go to you in a day or two. Arabel declares that never, never, will she depend upon *me* for the accoutrements of her first born—she has registered that vow—I am perfectly ashamed of myself, and if you thank me again, I shall take it for mockery. So you are resolved on the " little girl "—Be right, mind, on every account. At the same time, I am not so sure about it as you are !

Just then, came in George and Arabel—The Hedleys arrived last night, and remain this day in London on their way, I think, to Tunbridge Wells. They left their luggage

behind by rail, and Arabel had to relieve their " utter destitution," from her own wardrobe. George looks all the better for his tour ; and this morning Henry went upon his, to Ireland, and of course we shall not be here on his return.

Oh—I did not thank you for the interesting sketch of your house. I went through all the details with the pleasure you may suppose I should take in what so nearly and day-by-day concerns you—and Henrietta you must have really a pretty home —though you despise my suggestions of architectural improvement altogether. How pretty the trees must be, how green and pleasant the look out ! Have you a sunny aspect ? is the house warm ? When the " *children* " run about the lawn, how you will like to stare out of the windows !

Robert and Peninni have gone out in the carriage with Mr. Kenyon, and I was to have gone too if the wind had not been so cold. But this horrible climate is beginning to put out its gripes, and I must take care.

God bless you my beloved sister ! Every post reminds me of you anxiously. What I would give to be near you ! But you have Surtees, which is better—to say nothing of his heart, which indeed I value as it deserves.

Kiss the darling for me, and love your ever attached

BA.

47

Plans for Rome—Wilson returns from holiday—Engagements—More caps—Staying for the Tennyson christening—Father Prout.

London,
Sept. 25, 1852.

One word to my beloved Henrietta, while I wait for Arabel who is coming to take me to dine at luncheon time in Wimpole Street for this fourth day.

Henrietta, we are going to Rome. We shall remain a week or two in Paris, and then we get on to Florence—remain for a time—and so advance to Rome. In the spring we hope to see Naples. Is not God good to us ? We are spoiled, it seems to me, like petted children—all our fancies permitted to sprout

and blossom. We shall be *forced* to come back to Paris, next year, observe.

Wilson has returned, much to my joy. But Peninni has been a darling to me after all, and I miss something in the beloved little arms which clasped me round the neck in the morning at six, while the voice said " De-ar Ba " ! He is wonderfully improved in talking English, and since Wilson went away, has learnt so many " poems " (eight or nine) that she was half frightened—she never likes his learning anything for fear of over-excitement. Only the rosy cheeks reassured her. The child is in full health and enormous spirits. George wanted to know the other day if he *ever* cried ; it seemed out of his nature. When I call him good, I mean that his sweetness of temper and disposition are almost unnatural. Then he amuses himself for hours together with his pencil and paints —and at his age—think ! Arabel told him yesterday that he was to go to Wimpole street directly, as she had provided a rabbit for his dinner.

" No," said he, " Peninni no want to eat labbit, poor sing ! " Observe how he can put English words together. He talks almost wholly English at Wimpole street, and all my brothers are very kind and apparently rather fond of him.

Robert has been engaged for every day this week, which accounts for my going to Wimpole Street so much. I was and am alone. This evening will finish all—and he returns. We shall go in a week or ten days—we must. The weather is foggy and miserable, and it will be dangerous to stay on much longer. My poor darling Arabel !

Dearest dear Henrietta, every post thrills me with expectation to hear the great news ! I do hope I shall be in joy about you before I go. God grant it. Two other caps are on the wing to you. In time, this sublime work of caps will be consummated. We were all at Treppy's last thursday, and had a magnificent fête.

I heard the other day that Tennyson was anxious about our attending the Christening of his child—therefore, we may stay a few days longer for *that*, as it would gratify us both of do it, supposing any possibility. But there was a fog yesterday

you could not see through ; and even to-day, there is some fog. I doubted whether I could dare go to Wimpole Street, but the day grew brighter as it advanced.

Just here, came in Father Prout. Oh—such haste I am in, for now Arabel waits for me.

God bless and keep you. I wish I sate by your sofa—dearest !

Your ever attached

BA.

48

Delight in the new niece—Death of an uncongenial relative—About to start : plans for the journey—Letter from Pen.

15 Bentinck Street, Cavendish Square, London,
Oct. 11, 1852.

MY EVER DEAREST HENRIETTA,

half angry I am at your writing to me with your own hand. You write a great deal too soon,—you are up a great deal too soon. I don't understand how a wise doctor, like yours, can permit it. I do beseech you, take care of yourself and don't rush into fresh dangers by ignoring the actual ones.

Ah dearest dear Henrietta, but I must love you from my heart and kiss your dear hand out of the depth of it, for your affectionateness in writing to me. This, after the scolding is done. It was very, very dear of you to write, and I thank and love you.

Then I see the new small darling in your description. From the comparative anatomy of the *hair*, I made out a good deal about her, so pretty and bright and soft it is. But your description sets her before my sight. Kiss the mouth which is like the Althams, and the eyes which, being brown, must be like yours. Since she is yours I won't covet her—and you must accept that abnegation as a proof of love. Next year I hope I shall have a look at her—oh, I hope so. God bless you all and make and keep you very very happy meantime.

Papa has written to ask —— to go to Wimpole street after the funeral shall leave her at liberty. . . .

For my part it would be affectation to pretend to suffer a grief where I never professed or felt an affection. What I chiefly personally knew of —— was that she particularly disliked *me*. But there were excellent acts and facts in her life,—some nobleness, some generosity, and a strong sense of rectitude. I trust that she is rejoicing in the change which has made others sad.

Dearest Henrietta, we go on tuesday morning at six. I am overcome with business to do, to say nothing of the horrible weather. Now I must say God bless you, dearest! We shall stay in Paris a week or two, then we go on to Florence, and, if casa Guidi should be found " let," shall proceed at once to Rome. If not, we stay at Florence till perhaps the early part of December. That's the plan, so far—but we haven't arranged yet, *how* to get to Florence—whether by Chambéry and Turin, or Marseilles and the Riviera. I shall enjoy it very much I hope and believe—when once I am *gone*. But my heart aches to leave our poor beloved Arabel. Shall you be in London next winter, Henrietta, or spring—with those two children? We go by Boulogne.

Peninni sends you a letter. He wrote every word of it himself, without the push or pull of a finger-help—only of course I showed him how to spell the words. I think it is very well done for three years and a half, particularly as he never has such a thing as a lesson. I can't make out how he learns things. Robert's best love with mine to dear Surtees and your dear self and our kisses to the Two.

Your own attached

Ba.

49

Letters lacking, but news sent through Arabel — The children —Robin Hedley and his wife Kate—Love for Florence; regular life—Young Lytton, a spiritualist—also Powers—Yellow fever in Rome—Economy of Casa Guidi—Anxiety for Arabel—Peninni as traveller—Greetings.

Edward Robert Bulwer Lytton, only son of the novelist, and himself a poet who wrote under the name of Owen

Meredith, became Earl of Lytton and Viceroy of India. Robin Hedley, E. B. B.'s cousin, had recently married, and was taking a long honeymoon tour on the Continent. " The Althams " is a collective name for Henrietta's children.

Florence,
Nov. 30–31, 1852.

My ever dearest dear Henrietta, if I have not written to you before, it was not that I did not think of you but that I knew you would receive in the rebound whatever news of us I sent to Arabel. Then I looked in vain for the letter from *you* which I was to find at Florence. No letter from Henrietta till ever so long after. I waited and waited. Well, thank you for the one that comes at last. Most welcome it is, and most full of pleasantness with its story of you and the " children " (!) and Surtees, dearest Henrietta—not very long though—next time send me more particulars. . . . God bless your little darlings with their shining heads ! You say right when you believe that neither of them could want affectionate thoughts and prayers of mine. A true mother's heart I feel towards them—a true mother's heart in tenderness and close interest. . .

We went to visit Robin Hedley and his wife. She is pretty, I think, and perfectly natural. I like her, and so I do him—and I like to see them both absolutely radiant with happiness. I don't know which of them looks happiest. Robin enquired after you warmly, the other day, and desired me to give you his love. I liked him for that too. They are to come and pass the evening here and have a domestic tea drinking to-morrow—and they go to Rome in January, so to Naples, and return to Paris in April. Delighted they are with Florence—but they don't stay, nevertheless. She told me that Robin meant to live in England.

For my part, I love Florence. I love casa Guidi—and I am well—my cough is quite in abeyance. We are very comfortable indeed, and we both are enjoying our rest again. We have taken a man-servant who is very exact and punctual, so that Wilson professes to be satisfied and comfortable—which means more than if we professed the same thing. Peninni's bath, ready to the moment—breakfast as the clock strikes—

we are grown to be regular people. And do you know, we have breakfast before nine every morning—no more wasting time.

The attachés at the English embassy have called on us—one of them being Mr. Lytton, the son of Sir Edward Lytton. As he is a seer of visions, a great supernaturalist, I shall comfort myself greatly in his society, and in that of Powers, the sculptor of the Greek slave, who has " made up his mind," he tells me, upon the truth of the American rapping spirits.

We hear of the yellow fever being in Rome and Naples ; and in any case we would not leave Florence without letting our house. Now, we are living house-free, all expenses being paid for six months longer, and we not a *sou* out of pocket. So casa Guidi has not answered so badly—has it ?

No letter to-day from Arabel. I do wish she would write. Do you know, Henrietta, I am most uneasy about our darling Arabel, because when I was in England she really *needed* medical advice and would not go and take it. I can't help being uneasy, as I told her I should certainly be, when the distance grew greater between us. It's very tolerable to be at arm's length from a person you love, when they are not well—you see and hear for yourself, then. But I am haunted day and night with the thought of Arabel ; and because she doesn't write, I think there must be something wrong with her. I have had nothing but a short half sheet from her since our arrival. Henrietta do entreat her to go to the homœopathists —entreat her. It's a duty on her soul not to neglect her body. If she loves *me* she will do it, were it only for my sake.

Peninni is flourishing here for his part. He grows fat and rosy, and laughs unextinguishably. I assure you *he* won't leave English out of his nine languages : he talks most English now, on the contrary, and talks it very well indeed, and you should hear him discoursing about his travels—it's amusing. When he walked out at Genoa, he used to say to Wilson :

" Peninni no lite lis mell—Velly tirty mell "—which was too true a charge against noble Genoa—" Genova la superba " —being strong in the nostrils. Just as susceptible he was to other things—to the " fine mountains " and the waterfalls—

only he stood in great awe of the wolves as he passed the Alps. He enquired and learnt the names of all the places we went through. You never saw such a traveller in the shape of a child.

We have just had a fire lighted for the first time—and it is not necessary. Write very soon to me. You can't think what a joy it is to us to get letters. Robert says he loves you with brotherly true love and always shall. Our united love to dear Surtees—and to the *Althams*, kisses. God bless you into all joy! Prick Arabel into writing to me. Your ever attached

BA.

50

The embassy bag waits—Letters to Arabel serve a double purpose—Abortive expedition to Vallombrosa—Jealous of a girl-baby—Pen's affection; R. B.'s devotion to him—Pen remembers her.

Mr. Stuart was the accomplished critic whom the Brownings got to know through his lectures on Shakespeare when they were at Lucca in 1849; later they gave him a letter of introduction to Mrs. Jameson, whose critical work he admired.

Florence,
Jany. 27, 1853.

MY EVER DEAREST HENRIETTA,

I have a sudden opportunity of writing by the embassy's bag (quicker than usual) and I must write to you I feel, even though my letter should be brief in comparison with my ordinary letters, which certainly it must be. A courier goes, it seems, out of the customary times, and Mr. Stuart comes to make us aware of it. There is only about half an hour to write in. But it haunts me that you say I send you few letters. Remember, dearest Henrietta, I know it is much the same thing when I write to Arabel—and you do remember that Arabel has not two babies as you have. You are the richest of us three in that respect, and have enough to do, I dare say, in counting your monies. That I love you dearly, faithfully, unforgettingly, you know well besides, and we really ought (both you and I) to send most of our letters to that darling Arabel who wants them.

So glad I am this morning. Robin Hedley had bewitched Robert to go to Vallombrosa to-day. Such a scheme. Whenever it rains in Florence in the summer even, the calculation is that it snows in the mountains—and I, for my part, don't believe they would have found the monastery accessible at all at this time of year. There is nothing like a road at any time. Well, the mad scheme was to set off at six in the morning and return at night—going in a carriage of course to the foot of the mountain. I said everything I could against it—but Kate, who knew nothing about the difficulties, encouraged Robin—and Robert was rather willing than otherwise to be drawn in—so it was settled yesterday to my vexation. In the night however the weather changed for the worse and it became impossible—So glad I am. Mr. Stuart said last night the plan was a " preposterous folly," and the path would be found impossible. But you should have heard Penini's lecture.

" I aflaid of lose monts for you. You tate tare of lis snow on te mountains. And remember to buy Penini lese pipes," which were promised to blow soap bubbles; and which couldn't be left out of the more disinterested anxiety.

Dearest dear Henrietta, your letter made me joyous about you, it was such a pleasant sunshiney letter. May God be thanked that you are so happy. I have not yet got over my jealousy about the little girl-baby certainly, but otherwise I am in tolerable charity with you, and every little thing you can tell me is a great thing to my heart—so do write on about Altham curls and baby-water-gruel. . . .

Such a darling that child is, Henrietta. Yesterday I said, as I had him in my arms, " God bless my child "—on which he repeated, squeezing me fervidly with his little hands, " God bless mine Ba." Oh, he is very fond of calling us Robert and Ba. He always does when he means to be emphatically affectionate and coaxing. Robert has an absolute passion for him, just now. Think of Robert's always going to sit in that child's room while Wilson is putting me to bed, for fear he should wake and cry. If he wakes and sees Robert there he is satisfied, and lets himself be sung asleep quietly.

Yesterday a gentleman came to propose taking this house

for four months from march. It is not decided yet—for we have to consider terms and much besides. Robin and Kate passed another evening here the day before yesterday, and (as we have a piano at last) we heard her sing. She sings very agreeably. They seem very happy indeed. I like her, and think her pretty.

Oh Henrietta, I must go. The hour strikes. Next time you have a letter it shall be longer. Couriers wait for nobody you know. Kiss the babies for me. I was saying to Robert the other morning that Penini couldn't remember you as he did Arabel.

"Yes," he cried out, "I memember tuite well—and lity Baby too, and toys."

Best love to Surtees from both of us. God bless all of you.

Your ever attached

BA.

51

Henrietta's birthday—At Casa Guidi still instead of Rome—A visitation from Frederick Tennyson—Miss Sandford—The Robin Hedleys—Napoleon and the Salic law—Clairvoyantes and Sir E. Lytton's accident—Colombe's Birthday to be acted by Helen Faucit—Vincenzio their servant—Pen's affections—Surtees' absence—Plans—Love grows with the years.

Frederick Tennyson was the elder brother of Alfred, by whom his own poetic gift was overshadowed. In Florence he lived for twenty years, having married in 1839 Maria Giuliotti, daughter of the chief magistrate of Siena, and here he was an intimate friend of the Brownings.

Helen Faucit was a beautiful and cultivated actress, who left the stage on marrying Sir Theodore Martin.

Florence,
March 4, 1853.

MY BELOVED, EVER DEAREST HENRIETTA,

I have written but two days since to Arabel, yet I must write to you to-day. May God bless you and keep you, and yours—and make all your faces to shine one on another, taking and giving happiness. You are richer than I, in having two babies: but I say to myself flatteringly that I have one

who is worth two—(There is nothing personal in it, Henrietta, —I don't mean *your* two !) and so I have my compensations. I wish, when you write, you would tell me everything great and small about both the treasures. . . . Oh—I do wish I were sitting beside you, in spite of your English frost, just to look in your face and kiss you, and see those treasures of yours ! Only after about half an hour, I would come back to Florence, not to leave my body on your sofa, which would not be particularly amusing to you. You know, don't you, that I love you, constantly, and wish from the bottom of my heart all sorts of good and joy to you ? Yes, indeed.

You see we are not at Rome yet, and if this weather lasts I don't know when we shall be. It is very cold this morning—but, though we have had snow (which melted however as it came down) and though all the mountains round are white with stationary snow which makes the winds bleak, there has been no frost, no fog,—and one can't expect to pass through winter without any adversity. I am tolerably well—not quite as bright as in the warm days,—but by no means badly off. In Rome there is persistent rain, we hear, and much ill health. We shall lose Easter there, I dare say. Are you surprised that meanwhile we should have taken on our house at Florence ? Robert did it just for me—so I shall have it on my conscience if we should be unsuccessful in the letting. But I do love this house—there's the truth—and I could *not* bear the idea of tearing it all to pieces when it is so comfortable and artistic-looking. " Like a room in a novel," this room has been called.

Oh, Henrietta ! I am so tired this morning ! Mr. Tennyson (the poet's brother) came last night to have tea with us, and stayed till half past twelve. Sitting up destroys me, and my head almost dropped off my shoulders with aching. I do hope you go to bed early. Nothing wastes the vital energies so much as a persistency in late hours, and want of sleep. And I must tell you that we always breakfast at *nine o'clock*, come what may—which is a great reformation since we were in England, and gives us whole ribbands of long bright morning time which I, for one, wouldn't be without for the world. Robert has the virtue to get up regularly at seven o'clock. He

is longer dressing than I am, and doesn't mind waiting breakfast for me a little—because, you see I can't get up till Wilson is ready for me, and she has to dress Penini before she comes in to me. Keeping such early morning hours, we must go to bed early you see, and I groan naturally over vigils to past midnight. Mr. Tennyson is an immense favorite of Robert's —indeed so he is of mine. He is a loveable, upright truthful person, interesting in many ways—an earnest Christian too, which is a pleasant thing to meet with. He cares a great deal for music as well as poetry, and performs on the piano himself. He seems to care as much for Robert as Robert does for him—they are warm friends.

Miss Sandford is a new visitor of ours, and she comes to us once a week or oftener, to pass the evening. She is one of an enormously rich family : but she enjoys nothing of all of it—her love lying in quite another direction. I like her for her earnestness and affectionateness, and we have fallen into an intimacy quite suddenly. It was her sister who was bridesmaid to Kate Hedley. Kate is amiable, and makes Robin very happy. It is really delightful to see him—he has grown radiant —quite like another person. I never saw anyone so improved in my life. He always asked about you, Henrietta, as if really he cared for you. Their plans are perfectly unsettled, but they seemed to think it probable that they may spend next winter in Paris. Robin began by protesting that he would only live in England—but I doubt much whether he keeps and is likely to keep sturdily to the same patriotic mind.

I forgot to tell you, Henrietta, that you were perfectly misinformed about Louis Napoleon's excluding females from the throne. Ever since France has been a nation, females have been excluded from the throne, and the daughters of Louis Napoleon are equally excluded as a matter of course.

One thing I forgot too, to tell Arabel. When Mr. Lytton was here long ago talking of mesmerism, he told me that several clairvoyantes had declared to his father (the said clairvoyantes being unconnected with one another) that an accident was hanging over him—not a fatal but a serious accident. Mr. Lytton, who is full of faith in these things, said to us that

" he had been uneasy about it and afraid when every letter came, but that, as three months had passed away, he began to conclude that there must be some mistake! Only it was curious that these clairvoyantes should have all made the same mistake."

The other day, in comes Robert from the reading room. " Bulwer-Lytton has had an accident with his arm and can't attend the House of Commons—a serious accident." I seized upon Robert:

" What do you say? an accident? "

" Why Ba," said Robert, " it's not young Lytton, it's his father." Which made me laugh—and then I explaimed that I wasn't thrown into so much agitation by my sympathies, but by my interest in science,—reminding Robert of the prophecy, which he had never thought of since. Tell Arabel this, because it really is curious. I dare say you have seen the fact of the accident in the newspapers.

Another thing, too, I forgot to tell Arabel when I wrote to her, which relates to us more nearly. One of Robert's plays—" Colombe's Birthday," is coming out at the Haymarket about April perhaps. You will remember that it is an old printed play of his, and understand that he never thought of suggesting such a thing out of his own head. Helen Faucit (now Mrs. Martin) wrote to ask his permission to act it as she wishes to come out herself in Colombe. There was nothing for it but to say yes, of course. If there is a success it will be a good thing for us in a pecuniary point of view, and if not, there will be no harm done.

. . . Our man, Vincenzio, does well, and is the most regular and attentive of servants—not a moment waited for breakfast, or dinner! He is rigorous in his duties. So that we haven't a hair's breadth excuse for asking him to leave us, poor man, while I am vicious enough to feel a little ashamed of him—he looks so like a groom—by no means of the chambers. We are paying the best wages and hope at Rome to have a gentlemanly looking servant—to which we certainly haven't attained here.

Penini talks Italian to Vincenzio and to Girolama, the little dressmaker, who often comes here to have dinner, purely to

please Penini. She is so very little (shorter by the head and shoulders than I am), that he considers her a sort of comrade and friend and she has quite taken the place of the balia in his favour. Such a darling that child is, Henrietta. Such graceful winning ways the child has—so loving—so sentimental! if not like a boy, yet so much like an angel! Indeed he has a fraternity with the angels and longs for them. . . . He says to Robert or me sometimes:

"Good night mine darling! God bless you." The little sweet "*dear* Papas" and "*dear* Mamas" are ineffable for the joy they give. Only I am still rather jealous of Robert who is the favorite. When I want more kisses, I am sometimes told:—

"No—no more! all mine oller kisses are Papa's. I tant dive them away—they are all marked with Papa's name." . . .

Mind you write me back as many details as I send you! Too many can't be to please me. . . .

How do you comfort yourself, Henrietta, for the absence of Surtees? With the babies, I suppose, and with Susan. Do you practise on the guitar? Do you sing? Do you draw? have you any amusing books? Do you receive many visitors? Last week, five evenings out of the seven we had somebody here—we never have a party, observe—but people fall in for coffee and talk. I wonder if anybody has heard of Mary Minto—once so called—I forget her present name at this moment. Have you heard that we are going to Constantinople in the summer, on a visit to the American minister? We should both enjoy it, and not hesitate in agreeing to it at once; but we have to see Rome and Naples before we see Paris. I suppose you won't get to London this spring—shall you? . . . God bless you! Robert's best love with mine to you and Surtees, and kisses to the treasures. May you be happier and happier. Here am I, in the seventh year of marriage, happier than on the seventh day! The love not only stays, but grows. Thank God for it. Your ever attached

BA.

52

Letters more needed by Arabel—Rome impossible after all—Colombe's Birthday successful—Social activities and hope of showing off the children—Pen's dress, manners and charm—A goat carriage and a little brother wanted—An authority on Italian—Excursion to Fiesole—Perilous flowers—Another excursion *à deux*—Pen's appearance, lessons—Cheapness of Florence—A man-servant and a hanger-on—American visitors—Work and occupations—Arabel's anxieties.

This letter is an attractive example of the news about the children and their doings, which E. B. B. sent her sister and demanded in return. George is her brother.

Florence,
May 14, 1853.

MY EVER DEAREST HENRIETTA,

Oh, what a time it seems since I wrote to you. I always set it down as nearly the same when I write to Arabel, and the opportunities towards Wimpole Street are more numerous. Then I hate writing to you both by the same opportunity, because that makes two stupid letters instead of one. Also, you never seem to cry out to me with your needs as our dear Arabel does—your babies cry out to you instead—to say nothing of Surtees when he is in the garden or on the stairs. Dearest dearest Henrietta, believe that I love and think of you always, always—tenderly and truly.

Now let us have a little talk. We are not in Rome. Robert thinks it impossible to go. I begin to be afraid therefore that Paris and England will be both thrown out of the question for the year. We can't go back to the north before we see Rome—and a sweep through Naples, or even without Naples, through Paris to London would be far beyond the margin of our possibilities. At least so it seems. And now the season is late, you see, for Rome. Vexed, vexed I am. Then, my poems being out of print, and the new edition not out yet, there's no chance of income from that source for months to come. We must be patient. Rich people have certain advantages in their liberty, there's no denying—is there? It must be pleasant to do what one likes. Robert's play has come out

with applause and success : but a play of that refinement and delicacy of sentiment, without much action, is not likely to have what is called " a run " and to bring in any considerable profit. As for you—I hear you have a scheme about London and I do hope you may be able to get there, for Arabel's sake as well as your own—still more for her's than yours : but even you and Surtees are not so bound in heart to Somersetshire as not to be pleased with a little change.

Meanwhile, Henrietta, I hear of you ! That's the way you live a retired life, is it ? Giving sylvan routs, conciliatory routs between town and county, balls and supper parties ! Did the babies appear among the company ? Do you and Surtees quarrel as Robert and I do, about keeping the nursery in decent shadow on social occasions ? Robert won't let me take Penini with us when we pay a morning visit—which I all but revolt against. Wait till I get to London and go out with Arabel—and you ! See if I won't have my own way and work my vanity into light just as I please. Penini, too, who is just made to be carried about and shown off, with his long purple feather shaking over his trailing golden ringlets, and the small black silk jacket I have just finished embroidering for him ! He does look like a fairy king of a child—and is intended to be looked at accordingly. And he *is* looked at pretty well. He never goes out, without being stopped and kissed, and sometimes has a circle of ladies round him, Wilson says. But then I want to have my share of the glory, you see ! And Penini is extremely fond of society, you must understand. Whoever pays us a visit, Penini is in the room two minutes afterwards—and he makes supernatural efforts to keep his eyes open, so as to be awake at the time of the " large teas "—only he can't, poor child.

" Lily, you muss do mine hair velly pretty, and put on mine silk dless betause I mean to have tea wiz Mama and Papa and Misser Lytton."

Not a bit of it ! " Mine silk dress " can't keep mine eyes open. He's forced to give it up at last. For you are to observe, (in spite of Robert's despotism) if Penini could manage his eyes he could manage Papa too. Nobody resists Penini

in the house, if he once has a mind to insist on a thing !—and Robert as little as anybody. Set down that.

I should not have been so patient about not hearing from you, Henrietta, if Arabel had not told me heaps of things about you all—still it won't do any longer, and I must pull at your sleeve and entreat you to write to me and tell me all about you in particular—and in general about the babes—out of the wood so far—and about yourself. Does Altham begin to talk ? and what words does he say ? Tell me about his hair, if the curl of it continues to prosper. I suppose he runs strongly by this time. Is he ever naughty ? Do you send him out in his carriage ? Penini said to Robert the other day—

" I want you to buy somesing for me."

" Well, what is it ? "

" I want you to buy a little carriage, and a whip for me, and a little brozer to go inside for a shentleman, and I be the toachman. Den I want a little pony—no, not a pony—a kind of horse—I fordet what."

" A donkey ? " said I.

" No, not a dontey."

" A mule ? "

" No, not a mule."

" A goat ? "

" Yes—lat's it—a doat." See what an impression the famous drive in the goat carriage made on him—with the " shentleman inside " !—Poor Penini has the greatest yearning for a " little brozer " on other occasions, though, besides this. He is for ever recurring to the grand idea of having a " brozer " of his own. Once or twice he has suggested that Vincenzio might go out and " catch a little boy for me." Poor child. Ah Henrietta it's a blessing for your Altham to have a companion ready made for him, even though of less worthy sex. Don't you think so ? Penini's English is as fluent as possible. Yes, and he gets on with his Italian too. He and I had a dispute the other day whether the Italian word for " cloud " should be " nuvola " or " nuvolo." He would stand up for " nuvolo."

" *We* say *nuvolo*," said he.

"And pray who are *we?*"

"Oh—Penini, and Girolama and Vincenzio!"—identifying himself with the Italian nation. . . .

We had an excursion the other day to Fiesole—Robert and I, Wilson and Penini in an open carriage. There was a vision of a sunset over the mountains, as we looked across that wonderful valley where Florence lies enchanted. We climbed to the top of Fiesole (leaving the carriage) and sat down on an old wall which made me giddy to sit on—and I got scolded for having a "weak head," an expressive phrase. Well—but Penini looked over, and there he saw crowds of purple lilies. Oh—those lilies! how dreadful not to get at them! I proposed tying a rope round his waist and letting him down the wall, and then pulling him up again, lilies and all. He consented if he could have his own Lily tied with him: but he wouldn't go by himself, he said. Ah, well, then! what was to be done!

"Oh—so velly pretty those flowers!" We were in a state of despair, when, behold, a ministering angel came in the shape of a young girl of fourteen or fifteen, who proposed to let herself down the wall and gather the flowers. I cried out for fear—she would kill herself.

"No, no! non c'è pericolo." Down she clambered by the creeper and ivy, and up she came again with her prize. Robert gave her twopence halfpenny English, and she thought he was a prince in disguise, and Penini was in ecstasies—till he considered that he would like to have some may and roses to put with the lilies, and the coachman didn't stop the horses at the right hedges, which damped his joy a little—as is the way of all earthly joy, even when people go to Fiesole.

To-morrow Robert and I have a scheme in our heads, of going to Pistoia and Prato by the railroad, and of dining at a caffé somewhere "like two lovers," Robert says. In order to which we leave our respectability and Penini behind us. He won't like being left, I can tell you. He thinks he has a right to be with us wherever we go, and as he enjoys everything just as much as we do, I really am inclined to think so,

People say, Henrietta, that he grows prettier and prettier,

and that his hair *must* be put in curl-papers—nothing but curl-papers can account for the ringlets. I should like you to see him dance with his tamburine. It's really a pretty sight! Such steps, such attitudes—and everything in time to the music! He tells Robert to play first slow and then fast, and he begins in the most languishing manner! His one fault is considerable vanity. Applause he can never resist in any shape—that child of mine.

You asked me once if I had begun to give him lessons, and I repudiated the charge. Now, I must confess to you I am teaching him to read. I want him to know how to read for his own pleasure's sake and that he may inherit the fat of fairyland, and not that I have the least notion of beginning a course of education. One day Mr. Lytton asked if he could read, and we had to say no, which was dreadful, even though we added that he could write very well indeed: so Penini determined at once that he would learn to read directly, and do " mine lessons evelly day." We warned him not to say it if he didn't mean it. He meant it, he persisted. The next morning Robert observed:

" Well—are you going to learn to read? God loves truth."

" And *I*!" said Penini with dignity—and he fetched his lesson. That's several weeks ago, and he never has missed a morning—the reminding nearly always coming from himself. " Mine lesson " lasts about five minutes, and now he reads syllables of three letters and even simple sentences very nicely. We never quarrel, because, if he doesn't attend I won't hear him—which was the case this morning. Off he ran to Wilson. Presently he came back, and looking in my face with an irresistible smile, he said:—

" You dood now, Mama? "

Yes, I said, I was tolerably good, if he was. So he brought " mine lesson " and read it to perfection.

You could live at much less expense if you *were* in Florence of course. We have a man-servant, which makes a difference—and indeed I may say *two*—for I am convinced, and so is Wilson, that the porter of the Casa Guidi lives on us entirely. We

permitted Vincenzio to give him " any little thing left over " : but the supply has long past a definition of that sort, it is evident ; and on account of his being an old man and very poor, we can't find it in our hearts to make a revolution about it. Only we must take it into the reckoning when we reckon, or it won't be fair. Then, though we don't give balls and suppers, Henrietta, we have visitors at tea and coffee very often—every two or three days or more frequently. Quantities of Americans we have—but that's a fluent sort of society which comes and passes.

Robert and I are by no means idle. We write and we read ; and by the bye, I no longer complain of a want of new books at Florence. We get everything now we want, from a little library close by, and have *attained* to the last English novels. Then I have a Galignani newspaper on the fourth day, and Robert goes to the reading room where he has the sight of nearly every newspaper printed in Europe. Do you subscribe to a library ? Do you play on the guitar, Henrietta ? Do you draw ? Don't give up any resource—and besides you will have to teach the girl-baby, remember ! if not the boy. Penini will be learned on the piano, we intend—if he live to learn.

Ah—poor darling Arabel, and her anxieties, which are ours too, though the immediate pressure rests on her, dear thing ! Indeed I agree with you—indeed we all agree. But what's to be done ? There seems no escape from the situation. George has evident fears, in the letter he wrote to me about Robert's play, and which by the way I answered by private hand. I hope George received what I wrote.

God bless you my dearest dear dear Henrietta ! My love to dear Surtees—or rather say the love of us both. Kiss the darlings for me. Write to me soon and at length, and let me have heaps of nursery news.

Your ever attached

Ba.

53

Bagni di Lucca—The Grand Duke has their old house—Arabel's letters and Italian post offices—Mr. Lytton may visit, if the family do not—Friendship with the Storys and their children—Pen and Ferdinando—Hopes the girl will take after her mother, as the boy takes after his father—Sir E. Lytton and spiritualism ; his reservations—Mr. Story also—Her reasoned convictions may seem mad to others—Reported marvels and the state of the public mind—A " lion-huntress "—Unsatisfactory séance with Mr. Story.

Bagni di Lucca, Italia,
July 26, 1853.

My beloved Henrietta,

It seems to me that my chief occupation is writing letters. I am the most virtuous of my sex in that respect, and though you complain, Henrietta, for your part, yet I know, for mine, that you have all the news just as if it always went to you directly. Nevertheless and notwithstanding the long letter I sent to George only a few days ago, I feel myself drawn to write to you. I owe you a letter, and you are so gentle in your reproaches that they have all the sharper edges. Oh Henrietta, I wish you and yours were here. How Altham might ride about on the donkeys with Penini ! How you would enjoy the mountains, the exquisite scenery !—so wild, that even the Grand Ducal court, to say nothing of the Duke of Parma's and the King of Saxony's, can't tame it down ! By the way, think of the Grand Duke's being domiciled in our old house at the top of the mountain, and of Penini's nursery being one of the drawing rooms. The rooms of that house were very small even for us—we are much more at large here ! I understand that the court has to go to another house to dine. They take it very rustically. And I commend their taste in the matter of the house because of the magnificent situation which of course constitutes the whole attraction.

" I did not think the old man had so much blood in him." One needn't alter the quotation to make it apply, though he isn't an old man in years exactly : but care and fear and the sense of treason has blanched every hair in his head and cut his face up into furrows. So best.

I am not easy about our dearest Arabel. . . .

I think she must have written at length to me before now; but not a letter has been sent after us from Florence post office, and I am a little in despair about it. These Italian post offices are untrustworthy. Robert is writing however to Mr. Lytton to get him to enquire into the matter—also to tell him that we have a bedroom at his service if he like to come down to us for a breath of mountain-air. It was agreed on in Florence that he should come, if we could find room for him. I only wish we could spend our disadvantages on nearer and dearer persons. He is a great favorite of ours—but we would rather have—George, for instance!

A few days after our arrival, Mr. and Mrs. Story (he is the son of Judge Story) old American friends of ours whom we knew before Penini was born, and whom we took to be in Rome, rushed into the room to our great astonishment. They have two children—a boy, six years old, and a girl eight. Penini had them as guests last week "in mine garden," in the arbour, where tea and cake and fruit were properly prepared. When everybody had taken a seat, he came with a nosegay, and out of his own head laid a flower by everybody's plate. Wasn't it pretty of the child? The hospitality was returned yesterday evening; and Penini travelled on a donkey, on a Spanish saddle, to the Bagni Caldi, where the Storys live, and returned between nine and ten in the dark and in the extremest state of joyous excitement. We couldn't get him to cease talking.

"I felt a little aflaid at *the Storys*, when I went first: but after, not a bit—oh no!"

. . . alas, this morning, even the Spanish saddle has left certain undignified effects; and he finds it more convenient to sit on "Lily's knee" than on the chairs. You see it was a two miles ride; and going up and down steep hills is more fatiguing than to ride on a flat road.

He is the happiest of children here. In the first place, our new servant, Ferdinando, is his bosom-friend—and it seems to be a mutual passion.

"Ferdinando, dove voi?" makes the house ring at all

hours of the day. Then there's a boy called Carlino, the son of our landlord, who helps Ferdinando to fish with a net in the river, and to whom Penini carries his books down, and other treasures. This boy is another friend. It's pretty to hear Penini chattering Italian, using his opportunities. To talk Italian or English is much the same to him—he doesn't stop for a word in either language and is equally ungrammatical everywhere. He and Ferdinando and Wilson go down to the river every morning to make Flush swim, and these baths are doing Flush an infinite deal of good already, besides the pleasure they give to the spectators. It's a riotous little river, as clear as crystal, leaping and singing among the rocks—rather a mountain-stream, indeed, than a river at all! Penini wants sometimes to go in after Flush. He isn't easily frightened, that child! I heard a tussle between him and Wilson this morning, and on enquiring the reason of it, found that he was trying to get her to throw him out of the window into Ferdinando's arms below. It was only a first floor, to be sure! but just think of the child! "He's frightened at nothing and nobody," said Wilson, who was in a fright herself at the idea of such a thing!

. . . Now, Henrietta, I do hope your little Mary will be like you and not like Altham. Because Altham is like Surtees, and not you, and it's only fair that the other side of the house of Altham should have its turn. Then although I do all honour to Altham's attractions, I don't want a duplicate Altham.* Pray let us have a little variety. Ah yes—it's a great blessing to a child to have another child to love; and it must be sweet and lovely to see those two Altham children together playing and loving at the open door of life. Do you know what Penini said to Robert about a month ago?

"Dear papa—I want a baby velly mush. Evelly body asks Lily if I dot no boy to play wiz, and Lily obliged to say *no*." It was a very serious representation of disadvantages.

While I am in the midst of this letter, comes one to me from Mr. Lytton, from Florence. "As a proof of friendship,"

* In these words Altham's mother scented a reflection on her first-born! Explanation of the simple meaning has to be made in the next letter.

he encloses to me one from his father on the subject of the spirit-manifestations, which had affected him so deeply that he writes briefly on other subjects. I am forbidden to show the letter. I must not tell the contents. Nothing can be more curious. The communications refer to very private circumstances and touching circumstances, in which the idea of " trickery " is absolutely out of the question. But, after all, Sir Edward does not *conclude absolutely* on the agency being that of deceased persons—he doubts whether the spirits may not be " analogous to genii or faeries "—he has even a theory about clairvoyance. He concludes nothing absolutely on the character of the agency, but he excludes all notion of imposture —which indeed is perfectly impossible whatever else may be possible. To my mind, the communications of all these spirits appear strictly of a human character, and I see no sufficient reason for doubting that they are spirits who have lived in the flesh. The manifestations are deepening and widening however, day by day, and we shall know more presently. Mr. Lytton says he " hopes he may live to see the great day which is opening on the world "—he does not question the character of the agency as much as his father does. Neither do I, as I said before. We read of a prophecy concerning " angels ascending and descending upon the son of man." What if this spiritual influx and afflux is beginning ? It seems to me probable—but we have to wait quietly and see.

Mr. Story told us some curious things which had happened at Rome. He himself can move tables, he says, yes, and men : but I shall see to-morrow, when he and his wife come to drink tea with us. At Rome there has been a good deal of the mystical handwriting—only I can't tell you in this letter. I dare say you all, in Wimpole Street generally and in Somersetshire particularly, set me down as raving mad, while I consider myself more rational than any of you. Certainly the evidence has come to me closer, and therefore stronger than it has to you—still, it ought to have force with you also, because I have been accurate in my relations though unable of course to say everything. . . .

[On a strange story of a buried secret, circulated in Florence

at the moment of their departure, she comments :—] It's a curious state of the public mind when such stories can be told by grave men as facts, with or without foundation. That's all I conclude on it.

July 27.

You remember Mrs. Stisted's name as a visitor to the Knowles's years ago. She knew aunt Jane very well in Italy, and she lives here,—has a pretty villa, and is called by friends and enemies, the "Queen of Lucca!" A dreadful woman for lions and lionesses,—whom we are frightened of—at least I am, and wish myself from at the top of the mountain. I have escaped driving in her carriage to night, I hope—but she is coming to us to take coffee. Oh, an excellent person, I believe, at bottom—that is, at the bottom of the heart.

The Storys were here last night. He did not try the tables —moved a book, very unsatisfactorily, because a *push* would have done the same—"wrote"—what he "thought might be out of his own mind."

Said I to him, "I can't believe you, if you don't believe yourself."

The arm was not numb. To my mind he has not the faculty at all, though probably he is a good mesmerist. . .

Your ever attached

BA.

54

A misunderstanding of the previous letter; that boy and girl should be different is no reflection on Altham—Teaching Pen to read was for his amusement, not instruction—Dissipations at Florence —French readings—George travelling elsewhere—Mr. Spicer the historian of the manifestations—The Brownings receive no spirit communications—Mazzini is not helpful—Newspaper reports of the Brownings' life in London.

Mr. Spicer's book, *Sights and Sounds*, we learn from the Letters of E. B. B. (ii. 123, 136), was "flippant and a little vulgar" in style, though its honesty and accuracy were attested by American visitors. His second book on the subject had not reached them. In the second passage referred to, which

was written on the same day as this letter, R. B.'s interest but incredulity are more fully described.

Alla Villa, Bagni di Lucca,
August 30, 1853.

MY VERY DEAREST HENRIETTA,

I receive your letter and begin to write directly. In the first place I am in good spirits about the movement from Wimpole Street ; and next I am stirred into a letter-movement on my part through horror that you and Surtees should think me capable of depreciating Altham ! ! Really, I can't rest, with such a stain on my reputation, Henrietta. Innocent !—not guilty, *indeed !*

Now, listen—what did I say to bring down on me this heavy charge ? Altham is a splendid little fellow, a noble child. I admired him honestly and entirely. You have a rose in your garden, and I suggest that you should have a geranium too, on which you conclude that I don't care for roses, while all I want is a variety of colour and perfume. Why, because I admire Altham, am I to want a copy of Altham, side by side with the original ? Besides, Altham's a boy—he is very like Surtees, and very exclusively like Surtees, or was—or seemed so to me. Now a girl, might be in another type with advantage, and I coveted for her, certain curved lips that I know of—and that *you* know of when you look in the glass. Still if she misses them—if she is identical with Altham—she does not do badly after all—and accoutered with the chesnut hair (but Altham hasn't chesnut hair—has he ?) and the hazel eye and the fair skin, I am little inclined to question her prettiness. Give her a kiss from me, but two great kisses to Altham, to show that we are friends and that I never intended to insult him.

. . . it isn't according to my system to teach a baby of Penini's age against his will, and I couldn't bear to do it. It vexed me.

What set me on beginning to teach him at Florence was because he chose it himself, and because I desired to give him the opportunity of amusing himself with story-books, fairy tales and the rest—*not* as a beginning to his education !—the

fairies forbid it. I have not forgotten my liberty-plans, I assure you, nor will I ever be false to them. You will see. . .

Since we came here, Henrietta, we have been rather dissipated—for us. We meant to go out nowhere, and behold, we are constantly going out to omnivorous teas—of hams and tarts and fruits and cakes, and coffee, &c.! It's the primitive fashion of the Baths to dine at two or three, and drink and eat teas *accordingly*. We have been to Mrs. Stisted's, and to Mrs. Sunderland's; and to the Storys we go at least once a week, while at least once a week they come to us. She is kind and pretty, fresh and innocent, and intelligent enough besides—and he is a sculptor, poet, lawyer, mover of tables, and wears an enormous beard. I like them much—and Penini and the children go backward and forward to mutual teas, just as we aged people do. Edith is nine, and Joe six. Penini's special friend, of course therefore, is Edith, with whom he has struck up a romantic attachment. . . .

We are going to Mrs. Stisted's to hear French readings by M. Alexandre. We can't resist M. Alexandre who reads admirably. We have been twice to his public readings—he was the instructor of Rachel, and is here " en voyage." With all this and with the donkey-rides to boot, we manage to do a little work on most days. Nobody comes near us in the day, so that we have absolute liberty and leisure—and altogether I like it very much. Such scenery!—such visions from the tops of the hills! You in England don't know what nature is in his grand and wild aspects.

At this moment comes a letter from Arabel. Give her my thankful love for it, and tell her that, only because I am writing to you, I don't write to her instantly, for she has made me much happier and more satisfied. What vexes me (something *must* vex one) is that George should go to Spa instead of coming here. He might come to this place through Marseilles. We have a room for him. He might go to our house at Florence when tired of the mountains. How vexatious that he should throw us over so! I am quite in a passion.

Mr. Spicer, the famous Mr. Spicer, author of " Sights and

Sounds," who has written the history of *the* manifestations, (he is a poet, and a man of fortune—there's a contradiction !) is coming out to Italy with a letter of introduction to us. As Arabel says, the spirits seem to find one out on all sides ! Yet they won't communicate with me—no—oh, I wish they would —so does Robert—He always says that *that* is one of the things which provoke him to incredulity in the business. He would give anything in the world for *one* of the experiences talked of on all sides—and why should they not come to *him* as to others ? Why, I can't say. There are differences in the degree of receptiveness in the physical organizations of men and women. Yet who shall conclude that we are shut out for ever from these experiences.

. . . I am glad Mazzini sent the ticket—that was well and kind of him—only I am afraid he did no more specific good to Arabel, in that sending, than he has done to Italy on other occasions.

Always I forget to ask one thing. About five weeks ago an article appeared in Galignani, extracted from American papers I think, about literary persons in England. *We* were mentioned most absurdly—as charming people—only too difficult to get at—leading retired lives, chiefly on the continent —and appearing in London like the swallows—when we might be seen at the opera and the Exhibition, but nowhere else ! I want to know if this article appeared in the Times, or elsewhere in England. I should not like such stuff to be read. *Seen only at the Opera !* Such a lie too !

I do wish you would go to Arabel. Our joint love to Surtees—has he forgiven me ? and kisses to the darlings.

Your ever attached

BA.

55

Winter in Rome ; a sad beginning—Death of the Storys' boy—Thackeray, an amusing man-mountain—Visitors—Miss Hosmer Miss Hayes and Miss Blagden—Semi-masculine dress—A mixed party—Christmas at the Storys'—No more parties—A quiet evening at home—Christmas wishes—Write a family history—A paradox of prices—Christmas service at St. Peter's.

Of the people mentioned here, two may be specially noted. " Hattie " Hosmer, the young sculptress of twenty-two, " a great pet of mine and Robert's," was an early example of the complete bachelor girl, living alone, but " who emancipates the eccentric life of a perfectly ' emancipated ' female from all shadow of blame by the purity of hers." (*Letters of E. B. B.*, 166.

Miss Isabella Blagden—" Isa " to her friends—for many years was a centre of English society in Florence. With her warm sympathies and literary tastes—she was something of a novelist herself—she became a devoted and lifelong friend of the Brownings.

The artist Page was called " the American Titian " by Americans. He painted a portrait of R. B. during this visit to Rome ; but the picture has faded away, as Mrs. Browning (Letters ii, 148) feared would be the case, since he obtained his effects by undertoning, his theory being that pictures do not tone with time.

For Mrs. Sartoris, see Letter 56.

Rome, Via Bocca di Leone, 43,
Dec. 30, 1853.

I can't let the old year go without sending you a letter, my ever dearest Henrietta, though you will have heard of me through Arabel.

We had a melancholy entrance into our Roman life : but we are living past it, thank God ; and I am beginning to revive —and lift up my head—which figure means—get into good spirits again. All the invalids are convalescent, (those who survived poor little Joe S.) and Edith has been told of her brother's death, and borne it well. Penini felt it most deeply. . . .

You may fancy how those four simultaneous cases of fever frightened me for Penini—but I dare say Rome is getting

more healthy as the season advances and it grows colder. We are rather overwhelmed by visitors. I suppose they will drain off. We can't help people calling.

Mr. Thackeray, on the other hand, complains of dulness—he is disabled from work by the dulness. He " can't write in the morning without his good dinner and two parties overnight." From such a soil spring the Vanity Fairs ! He is an amusing man-mountain enough and very courteous to us—but I never should get on with him much, I think—he is not sympathetical to me.

Mr. and Mrs. Walpole have called since I wrote to Arabel. He is quite blind, carrying about a radiant face. (A son of Lord Orford's.) Mr. and Mrs. Silsbee, Americans, have a daughter, a medium. Mr. and Mrs. Thompson, Americans,—have a child eight years old, a medium—and others, whose names I can't recollect at this moment.

Oh—there's a house of what I call emancipated women—a young sculptress—American, Miss Hosmer, a pupil of Gibson's, very clever and very strange—and Miss Hayes the translator of George Sand, who " dresses like a man down to the waist " (so the accusation runs). Certainly there's the waistcoat which I like—and the collar, neckcloth, and jacket made with a sort of wag-tail behind, which I don't like. She is a peculiar person altogether, decided, direct, truthful, it seems to me. They are both coming to us to night, with Miss Blagden who occupies the apartment under theirs, you do not know the last, but Arabel does, as a very affectionate friend of mine and very loveable on her own account.

She devotes herself to a poor little invalid friend whom she brought from England, last monday. It was made a point of that Penini and I should go. Louisa was to " cry " if either of us refused—so very foolishly we both went. Penini was put to sleep at four to prepare him to wake at seven. Think of that child—the only child in a crowd of quadrillers. The dancing was as strange to me as to him, seeing that I have not been present at such an exhibition since some day in my teens beyond the memory of woman. Penini thought it " velly funny ! just lite playing ! "—which, considering that the play-

fellows were many of them grey bearded men of the greyest order, might have struck him as " velly funny " indeed. There were fireworks from the window. Some forty people present, and not a child but Penini. He as blithe as a bird till twelve o'clock at night, and attracting everybody by his sweetness and grace. As I was putting on my shawl in the ante-room, prepared to go away--he ran back to our infinite amusement, into the crowd, and cried out at the top of his voice " Dood night ! " He couldn't omit such an act of courtesy, not he. Really he did look lovely and was properly appreciated—wore a black velvet frock with blue satin rosettes on the shoulders and shoes —his long ringlets shining like gold. Robert and I were very proud of him. Wilson was in the house, for fear of accidents, which didn't occur. Isabella Blagden is passionately fond of him and has him to dinner twice a week in general

. . . On Christmas day we went to the Storys. I did not like it, but, poor things, we had agreed that it should be so, to keep off some of the shadow of the day. We dined at five, Penini and Edith dining with us—by the way he fell sound asleep with his head on the table, between the turkey and the plum pudding.

" Here's the pudding Penini ! wake up ! " He woke up to eat the pudding and fell prostrate again ; and was carried home in a state of unconsciousness which lasted till morning. Now he and I have finished our night dissipations for the season. I shall go no more out at night till the spring. I did not profit much by going to Isabella Blagden's, and I don't mean to " spend myself for naught "—so people who want to see me must come here where we are hospitable in black tea and cake, and the sofa turned round to the fire—I couldn't even go to Mrs. Sartoris's last night, where there was exquisite music. Robert went, and I stayed at home with Mr. Page the American artist, to talk spiritualism. He is a great favorite with both of us.

Dearest, dearest Henrietta, I do wish you were within face-sight and voice-hearing. May God bless you and Surtees and the darlings in this new turn of the years ! I love and pray for you. May God's love answer my prayer !

Won't you write a long letter to me. Write as usual—on thin paper only—the new postal arrangement is more favorable to us than the old one, and envelopes are allowed. So don't mind the form of the letter. Send me plenty of news of the children. I want to hear about Altham. . . . Don't teaze him about his lessons for Heaven's sake. Teach him only if he likes it. Is he full of play ?

And the little " Mary Bud "—Does she

" Gin to wink her golden eyes ? "

I want a whole child-history, so sit down and write it. I hear of your giving dinner parties and being prodigiously hospitable. Oh Henrietta ! Rome is enough to ruin us with its dearness ! We are reduced to live upon woodcocks, snipes, hares and turkeys, because of beef and mutton being so high in price ! For the rest we are very well. Penini looks as bright as he was in Florence ; and I have been out most days since I came.

I was at S. Peter's on Christmas morning, and having the " costume de rigueur "—black gown, no bonnet, and a black veil on my head—was admitted to the reserve seats, and saw pope and cardinals and all. The music was sublime, which, with the influence of the place and the sight of the crowding multitudes, carried me over everything I could otherwise have been schismatical upon. I was very much impressed and affected. Penini was present, in the body of the Church, held up over the people in Ferdinando's arms, and Wilson by his side. Penini must see the sights, I can assure you, or there would be no peace for us. . . .

Now God bless you dear Surtees, beloved Henrietta, sweet Altham and baby ! I love you dearly.

Do the same by your

Ba.

56

A birthday letter—A child and the Lord's prayer—Overwork—Pen's alleged likeness to his mother—His grace—Pen and spirit visitants—Children and spiritualism—A message about Wilson, herself mediumistic — A picnic — Lockhart's geniality — The Carnival; Pen and the Thackerays—The Crimean War and Surtees—Union of France and England—Health of Mr. Barrett and Mr. Kenyon—Verses for Arabel's bazaar—Home greetings—Penini's birthday wishes.

Mrs. Sartoris was Adelaide Kemble, second daughter of Charles Kemble. She gave up her operatic career on her marriage in 1843, and spent much of her time in Italy. The Sartoris' house in Rome, near the Trinità dei Monti, writes E. B. B. elsewhere, " has the best society in Rome and exquisite music of course."—Mrs. Kemble was her sister Fanny, the actress, who after her divorce from her husband, the American Pierce Butler, a distant collateral of E. B. B.'s cousins, resumed her maiden name.

Writing to Miss Mitford E. B. B. records that Lockhart, son-in-law and biographer of Walter Scott, remarked on this occasion, " I like Browning—he isn't at all like a damned literary man." (See *Life of Robert Browning*, p. 191.)

The verses for Arabel, " The Twins " by R. B. and " Song for the Ragged Schools of London," were printed in a small pamphlet for sale at her charity bazaar.

Rome, 43 Via Bocca di Lione,
March 4, 1854.

My ever beloved Henrietta,

I cannot let the day pass without writing some of my memory and love to you. God bless you and all yours—who are a crown of joy to you. May no leaf fall off from that crown, and no flower droop. I think much of your Altham who must be so surprisingly forward for his age. As for what Arabel tells me that he can say the Lord's prayer, I praise *him* and scold *you* for it. It's all wrong, be certain Henrietta. Never was there so prodigious a child that at three years old he could understand that prayer. When I learnt it first I must have been years by years older, and I was taught an explanation at the same time. Well,—the explanation appeared to me another prayer. I couldn't possibly associate the one with

the other ; and yet I wasn't a dull child, Henrietta. Do you think I would teach that prayer to Penini at his age ? Indeed I wouldn't for the world. Now I didn't mean to take up a stool and throw it at your head, by way of being affectionate to-day.

You would criticise Penini's prayers I dare say—and they are open to criticism certainly—he prays strangely sometimes —" that Flush's hair may grow," and sublunary things of that kind. . . .

. . . Now take care, Henrietta, you don't overwork that child of yours. The susceptibility of the young brain, and the harm which over-effort prematurely, does to the *intellect* as well as to the health, cannot be too much considered by all of us. How do you mean that a child of three years old can't play all day ! why, play is the occupation of a child—a child learns most when he plays—and an active vivacious child never feels the time hang heavily on his hands whatever grown up men and women may do. . . . . Perhaps you would not think Penini as pretty as Altham is, so don't talk about coveting your neighbour's son's beauty indiscreetly—why he is often insulted by being called like *me*, Henrietta, which exasperates me. The little nose is cupid-pug—the mouth is very pretty, and so are the blue eyes with their miraculous sweep of eyelashes.

But what is lovely in Penini is his grace. (I think I never saw quite so graceful a child, taking altogether.) And then his hair has an excellent scenic effect, there's no denying. After all, it's the soul of him that's the bewitching thing—he is so loving and good, and *truthful*, Henrietta.

" I always teeps my words "—If he promises a thing it is safe. Add to which that he has faith to remove mountains, and believes in the reality of the spiritual world just as he believes in the sun, and the fire, and me and Robert.

The other day, (I omitted to tell Arabel that, but you will communicate it), an American sculptress, who has had visions, and is a writing medium, (very clever she is, only twenty four, and one of the frankest, bluntest, nicest little creatures that ever took my fancy) was telling me how the other night on entering her bed-room, a spirit, some three feet high,

exquisitely formed, came running, dancing to her from the furthest end of the room close up to her knees, when as she stooped towards it, it vanished.

I turned to Penini and asked him if he wouldn't like to have seen the little spirit.

" Oh yes," said he, " velly mush ! a little pretty spillet lite lat ! but : " (holding his head on one side in an attitude of consideration) " I sint if a velly large angel tame, I be lather aflaid."

" Afraid," I cried," why should you be afraid ? You are not afraid of the spirits who write."

" No, not a bit—but then I don't *see* them, dear Mama."

After all it was only a passing mood of his. In general I believe that " large angels " would not startle him much, for we have tried to keep him whole and pure from the superstitious fears which have been common to us all through the circumstances of our education, and which I for my part have scarcely quite overcome to this day.

If I am not wrong, Henrietta, before our children are grown up spiritual manifestations will be among the commonplaces of life, and it is well to have them prepared. Not that I talk to Pen much of the " writing " or other things. I don't want him to be mixed up with them unduly, before his natural and moral life are healthily and wholly developed, but he knows that such things are, and considers them no more extraordinary than eating, drinking, or sleeping. The " writing " he generally objects to, because of its " spoiling his time "—i.e. taking up his play-fellows' time. . . .

Oh, Arabel needn't be afraid. I have no desire to mix up Penini in any of these phenomena, believe what I may. Indeed it would clearly be injudicious, for every reason. Only I wish him to have right views as to the possible and probable influx of the spiritual world among us, because these appear to me not simply just, but nobly influential to life.

Let me tell you what he said to me the other morning on his return from walking.

" Dear mama, I saw to-day the points of the trees of the place where they've put Joe's outside."

A clairvoyant, talking of the " shell of us," could not have spoken better of the burial of the body. Of course you will understand he meant poor little Joseph Story by " Joe."

As to the manifestations I have written so lately to Arabel that there is nothing more to say. On one evening we failed to get answers—nothing was said but " no, no." Then to me—" Send Wilson to bed—she is ill "—Wilson laughed and said it was a great mistake—she felt so sleepy she couldn't keep her eyes open but was as well as possible. We persevered a little therefore, and then I prepared to go to bed.

In the course of the undressing—down fell Wilson into the chair—in a sort of half mesmeric half-fainting-affection, which frightened me horribly, (because Robert was out and Ferdinando asleep), the large tears dropping down her cheeks. After a proper application of hygienic vinegar, she recovered however—and then we both remembered what had been written.

" Wilson is ill—send her to bed." Curious, was it not ? There had been no communications the least moving or purporting to come from spirits connected with either of us—but I suppose she was out of order somehow, and the spirits were aware of it though we were not. They are said to be solicitous generally about the health of their mediums, and careful not to hurt them. Now you laugh at me, or frown at me, or something—I feel it through the air.

Robert went with Mrs. Sartoris, Mrs. Kemble, Lockhart and others on an out-door excursion miles away yesterday. The air was not quite mild enough to admit of my going safely, and I would run no risk of course, but he was vexed to have to leave me behind. I should certainly have liked it. Everybody was brilliant, and Lockhart genial, which was more remarkable—they made a fire out of doors, and boiled a kettle and had tea—to say nothing of Champagne and lunch for those who preferred it. Three carriage-fulls of people ! Next week something similar is to be tried again and then, if it should be possible, I may be of the party.

The carnival passed in vain for me—no, not absolutely in vain, since my Penini enjoyed it immensely, and has a com-

plete *show* of the bonbons thrown at him and given to him in the course of it. He entered into the whole fun of the thing, and blew out the Duke of Prato's moccoli as fast as they were lighted, with a vehemence of impudence most amusing to the spectators. By the way, I forgot to tell Arabel, that Mr. Thackeray presented him to the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland who were extremely gracious to him. I quite forgot that in the number of Penini's social successes. Mr. Thackeray won my heart rather by his good nature to Penini —and as to the Thackeray girls I am inclined quite to love them: They are frank, intelligent, and affectionate—three excellent qualities. I shall be glad to see them in London again this summer, where they will arrive sooner than we.

Dearest, beloved Henrietta, I shall see *you* in London, I do hope and trust. Oh—it will be cruel if the war should sweep you off to Ireland. That would be worse than Sinope. There surely can't be such a horrible possibility, though Arabel says you have it in your fears. On the other hand how delightful it will be to meet all together in London this summer, and have and hold you for weeks and months—to make Penini and Altham friends! Oh—how pleasant. It's a dreadful business, this war, but while England and France are together I can't anticipate much ultimate evil from it.

. . . Papa is not well, I fear, with this asthma. Poor, beloved Papa—he will persist in staying in London through the winter, and must suffer as a matter of course. Mr. Kenyon suffers too from asthma, I believe: but *he* will go as far as the isle of Wight at least—he will use means.

Robert and I are going to send Arabel some verses for her bazaar-stall and the Ragged schools.

. . . Write, my dearest Henrietta, and tell me things of you, in general and particular. My best love to Surtees and heaps of kisses to the pets. May God bless you all—keep you happy—bless you to the blessedest. Robert's love with mine. How I liked your story about the birthday! Penini modestly desires to have for his birthday presents next week, "*a live horse and an elephant.*"

Your ever attached BA.

57

A seeming break in correspondence—Happy but for " ifs "—Hot weather dishabille and a caller—Mr. Norton—Pen's garments and his love for his mother and views on the war—Begs news of Altham—Providence and the seaside.

The Crimean War had brought Major Cook to Plymouth ; he was so busy that Henrietta had " only half a Surtees there," and there was still a danger of being sent to Ireland.

Brinsley Norton, youngest son of the unhappy Norton marriage, had married this girl at Capri in the autumn of 1853—a peasant girl " who knows nothing about anything—shoes and brushes included." An English visitor saw him " in his island home translating Longfellow's poems into Neapolitan, of which he knows nothing, for the entertainment of his wife, who could not possibly comprehend a line under the most favourable circumstances."

Florence,
July 29, 1854.

My beloved Henrietta,

You will have given me up by this time, I dare say, for a good for nothing Ba not worth a thought more. Understand how it has really been, rather,—how I have been swinging like a pendulum between places and doings, and after been broken off short, and thrown on the floor, and left to make the best of a bad position. Then I didn't know where to find you till I had your address from Arabel. Dearest dear Henrietta, believe me that I have not sinned against the love of you and the anxiety about you. . . Tell me of yourselves—I am so anxious. Be good and tender to me and write, and forgive this silence which was not a real silence, seeing that you heard the news of me from London regularly and I trusted to that.

I should be quite happy, if I had good news from England of you all, and if (oh, those " *ifs*," Henrietta) I were less anxious about dear Miss Mitford from whom Arabel enclosed me a note of very bad and melancholy omen. Arabel says, too, " she is very ill "—and I am most uneasy. Well—there is no

use teasing *you*. You can't help me, and oughtn't to be bored beyond your own sphere of necessary vexation.

If you could see me here—Low arm-chair—feet on the sofa. Costume—as little as possible, and chiefly expressed by negatives—No stays, no gown, scarcely any petticoat—a white half-dressing gown—dimity jacket, I mean! The other morning Robert called me *just so* (when I had had the modesty to run away) to receive young Mr. Norton—who, by the way, sate exactly *four hours* with us, keeping his carriage waiting at the door. I say his carriage, and should have said his fiacre—for which he must have paid as you may suppose. In my opinion he was transfixed by the sight of my costume. Nothing else could account for it.

I forget whether I ever told you anything about Mr. Norton. He is the younger son of the poetess, and not three and twenty yet. About a year ago at Naples he married a Capri girl of his own age, and they are residing in Florence now. . . . The inconsistencies of men are stupendous. I like him very much. He is earnest frank and ingenuous—told us all about his marriage, and his previous life. . . . Lady Grantley she is likely to be one day—his elder brother having a " bad life " as it is called. Mrs. Norton (the poetess) is coming to Florence, he hopes, to stay.

Penini's trowsers are beautifully embroidered—for I have found a treasury of muslin embroidery in Florence, and I am extravagant about his trowsers and collars. One must be extravagant about some things—and doesn't he tell me that he " loves me better than all the ladies in the world ? "

Penini is considerably interested about the war, and pretends to read the newspaper in Italian about " bellissimi regimenti," and how his friend Napoleon has sent eight hundred thousand " uomini in Turchia." It's amusing to hear him. He asked me the other day if I didn't dislike the Austrians very much. I said :—" Yes, I dislike them in Florence, they have no business here."

" The Tedeschi *are* velly naughty, *I* sint. The Flench are dood—The Russians—oh, hollid! The Turts, velly dood." So he passed judgment on the nations. It isn't *I*, I assure you

—it's altogether Ferdinando, who helps him to his opinions on politics. . . .

Tell me of Altham—costume and lessons and plays and all—It interests me as you may imagine. Tell me if you have let your house in Somersetshire, and if the children bathe. I should like some sea air for my treasures, I too: but God arranges right for us all. Have you pleasant rooms at Plymouth? Tell me all and write soon I do beseech you. Remember that I am dependent on you all for letters. God bless you dearest dear Henrietta and dear Surtees and the darlings. Robert's love with that of your

BA.

58

Mr. Barrett's illness; its effect on their correspondence and upon Arabel—Life at Plymouth to be described—The adverse balance in exchange of letters—Pen's music; composes an opera—Florence Nightingale—Interest in the Crimean War: a hateful necessity—Friends and kinsfolk at the front—The war redeemed by the French alliance—Spirits, evil as well as good; false teaching mingles with fact—Automatic writing by Wilson.

Florence,
November 6, 1854.

MY BELOVED HENRIETTA,

When I received your last letter with its cruel hit—a regular minié-rifle letter, dear!—I resolved you should never, no never, reproach me again. Yet you do, I feel. It was the news from Wimpole Street which kept me from you. I had to write there, and still there, under the circumstances. Oh Henrietta—how sad, how sad! I can't bear to think of my poor dearest papa, shut out of those active ways which were at once pride and pleasure to him.

And there's my darling Arabel—she seems sad, depressed—I dare say papa's being in the house always under such circumstances must make it all gloomier for her, dear thing—she has no one to talk to and be with as when you and I were at home. She misses us and has nothing besides. Oh Henrietta, I do hope you will manage to get to London this November as you thought of doing, and cheer her up a little.

Next year it will be my turn—and then you won't forget if you please, you and Surtees, that you must come and cheer up *me*, or I shall be envious and wholly uncharitable.

I hear you are dissipated at Plymouth, going to balls, having picnics, doing all sorts of improper things in a military way. Now I do beg you to write and tell me about it all—because there's a difference. You see my letters—while Arabel can't write for both you and herself. Tell me first about the nursery, and then about the gaiety. I, on the other hand, give you my history without waiting for yours. . . .

Mr. Kenyon has desired Penini to write to him, and a long letter the size of this paper has been produced in consequence all about the rabbits and tortoises—every word the child's own. He has an ominous fluency in composition, and really writes wonderfully. . . .

Think of those little fingers, Henrietta, running down the scales on the piano in the key of C, G and F! It *is* so funny! and the small heels kicking out! He is very much vexed, however, at finding himself unable to accompany his singing of "La Donna è mobile" from Verdi's opera of "Vescardello." He thinks it "tuite turious" that he can't—"That *beau*-liful opella!"

Instead of which he's reduced to sing a beautiful opera of his own composition about Napoleon and the milkman. The milkman, you are to understand, is an intimate enemy of Penini's, seeing that when he comes here with the milk he pretends to want to take away Peni's favorite gun—therefore it's a great thing to set Napoleon up against the milkman. In the opera the milkman brings bad cream and milk for the "soldati francesi" in arms against the Russians, and so Napoleon comes out against him in vengeance! "è fusillato—è morto!" (oh, this opera! all in Italian of course!) and then comes the burial—"misericordia," "campo santo"—and all—and an immense noise of "pieti" and bells. How I laughed! Penini thinks humbly that he sings it "rather lite Mrs. Sartoris."

Do you observe in the paper Miss Nightingale's expedition to the east? She called on me when we were in Welbeck street and sent me some flowers afterwards. A pretty and highly

accomplished woman—even *learned*, she is—and she is acting greatly on this occasion, together with other women. I see that Miss Selon is among them.

Arabel wants to know whether I am interested about the war. Certainly I am interested about the war. It seems to me a most righteous and necessary war—and that's all one can say of a war, when one would say the best. The Turks are not interesting, I confess—but can we say that they should not be protected according to the bond voluntarily entered into by us? and would you stand by and see a dog, even, kicked to death? Then there are great interests involved besides the specific Turkish interests—the liberty and civilization of all Europe, and the good of the world for centuries. Therefore, hating war, I do accept the war as a necessity. A dreadful necessity certainly—it makes my blood creep to think of the agony of mind endured by thousands who have no personal part at Sevastopol, and who suffer and die doubly in those dearer to them than life. The telegraphs, from their uncertainty, add much to that sort of anguish. I am so sorry, so sorry for poor dearest aunt Jane. Many here are in the same situation. Dr. Harding has a son at Sevastopol, and his daughters look quite pale and jaded. He is Aide de Camp to General Pennefather, and we have heard letters read from him of a simple heroic character. What comforts me, I repeat, is the *alliance*. Nothing so good ever happened either to England or France as their union; and it is infinitely affecting to me to read the instances of friendship between them, with which the newspapers abound.

As to the "spirits," my dearest Henrietta, four hundred thousand families in America have given their names lately as believers and as actually in enjoyment of spiritual intercourse. There is a great deal of false teaching, I am sorry to admit—but this does not interfere with the validity of the facts. If spirits at all, there must be evil and good, and a logical sequence it seems to me. If I open my house-door to the street, I shall have thieves as well as friends on whom to exercise my hospitality. If I open my windows, I have wind as well as sunshine. Mr. Jarves told me the other day in proof of some amount of

good being done, that twenty or thirty persons, *of his own acquaintance*, have been brought to abjure atheism and materialism by these manifestations. The extraordinary things I am hearing day after day—for the thing makes progress—it would startle you to listen to. Wilson still writes—but generally so illegibly and in so broken a way that we can't make much out of it. She is a weak medium—it's like trying to get a clear reflection in tremulous water. I wonder at none of you attempting to write. What you are afraid of I really can't imagine. . . .

God bless you, dearest dear Henrietta,

Your ever loving

BA.

59

Convalescent after a month's illness—R. B.'s tender patience—Silence when she herself is silent—Asks for news and plans—Warning against pressing child—Teaching in music by R. B.—Retirement and a bad winter—Bad verse for a child to learn—Mr. Kirkup's spirit experiences—Humiliations of the Crimea—Behaviour of the French contrasted with other nations—"Aurora Leigh"—Hopes of a visit if they are sent to Malta—Arabel's overwork—Death of Miss Mitford—Pen's dainties for breakfast.

Mr. Kirkup was "a curious old savant who in his day was well known to all who cared for art or history." The way in which this ardent enthusiast was bamboozled by his clairvoyante, who tipped the wink to Browning while Kirkup was out of the room, is told in the *Life of Robert Browning*, p. 211.

Among the imitators of the original Peter Parley of John Wolcot, the one who used the name "*tout court*" was C. F. Lawler.

Major Cook was still stationed at Plymouth; there was now some possibility of his being sent to Malta.

Florence,
February 12, 1855.

MY BELOVED HENRIETTA,

I am getting quite anxious lest you should be anxious, all of you, about this silence of mine. Arabel is sure to be fancying various kinds of black reasons for it—and

unfortunately one of them is true, for I have been unwell—(am right again now—so nobody need mind) but very unwell—with the worst attack on the chest I have suffered from in Italy. There was no use writing while it lasted, and now I am convalescent. . . . Altogether it's wonderful that after a month I should be out of it as well as I am.

Robert observed this evening at tea time that I was " beginning to look like myself again " ! For more than a week it has been mild spring weather—I might go out if I were as strong as usual—but the happy influence comes to me through the doors and windows. Nights are good—appetite is recovered, and I have every intention of getting fat directly.

Poor darling Robert ! I am still more glad of this for him than for me. In the first place, his nights have been diversified by keeping up the fire, boiling the coffee, and listening to the horrible cough which made sleep out of the question for either of us. Nothing could exceed his tender patience—but of course it was miserable for him—to say nothing of his anxiety about me which was the worst of all, I am very sure—I thought at one time we were to set off at once for Egypt or the Sandwich islands ! It's lucky we are not too rich, or you would have missed us one way or the other. To speak seriously, I am past the evil now, and it will be an absurd throwing away of thought, if Arabel, or you think uneasily about me now. I tell the truth always—and you would have it from somebody if I didn't, I daresay : but I always do tell it, even when not forced by that consideration.

I do wish Arabel would write to me. I do wish you would write to me, Henrietta, as you said you would. When I'm silent everybody's silent, and silence on your parts I can't bear. Oh—of course it was my turn to write. But now I write ; and now somebody write quick again and let me hear all about Papa and Trippy, and all of you.

What a wonderful change in dear Trippy. Robert kept preaching hope to me—but I was reasonably desponding about her at her age ! !

Dearest dear Henrietta, how good of you to write that small slip engrafted on Arabel's letter. Hers was delightful

in the picture it sent me of you and yours—of the darling children especially whom I would give much to hold in my arms and to my heart. When shall I ? Where are you going, Henrietta ? Surely you will write as you promised, and then I shall hear about these dreadful military plans which set my thoughts swimming the Mediterranean drearily about you. Oh—I would rather you were not sent abroad—I do distrust the military arrangements of my beloved country to the last degree just now, and would not willingly see you and your darlings exposed to her tender mercies.

. . . Penini has remarkable quickness ; and we might, by a little *pushing*, make him do anything : but we won't push, be certain ! Robert says if he pushed him in music for instance, he would make an " infant wonder " of him in two years. We want instead an intellectual man, of healthy development. . . .

Robert teaches him beautifully. I confess I thought the system rather dry for so young a child—all those scales ! But Robert insisting that I should interfere as little with his music as he did in my departments, I was silent, and now confess him to have been right and justified in his resolution of well-grounding his pupil. I hear Penini answering questions I should be a little puzzled at myself. He is very *vif* and ardent about his music,—anxious to get on—and of course the advantage is great of having such a teacher as Robert, who is learned in music and teaches nothing superficially. The child sits by the fire with a music-book and reads the notes aloud, quite fast. It's funny to hear him " e, *tot*chet, sharp," &c. . . .

Of course we have been shut out lately from the living world. The only chance for me was quiet and not talking, and Robert excluded everybody. The weather is rainy and sunshiney to day—real April weather, and of a delightful temperature. Still, Florence has behaved ill to me this year. It has been an exception among winters—even at Pisa—and Mrs. Martin writes to me as bad a story almost of Pau itself. I am afraid that a succession of winters in Paris is a thing out of the question for me—I have not stuff in me to bear it. . . .

Did you see a great many people in London, and whom ?

Little Mary too must be a sweet little thing, and forward, very. But why do you let her learn such bad poetry, and such incomprehensible verses for a child as the too celebrated " Pity the sorrows of a poor old man " ?

The first line is the only one to be understood by a child—and, for the rest,—pity the sorrows of such detestable poetical phraseology ! Better things are written now both for babies and men, I am glad to say. Now, some of Mary Howitt's verses for young children, are very pretty, and have touches of nature in them which go deep into their tender fancies.

Mr. Kirkup (artist and archeologist—a rather famous person of whom you have heard through us) came in to us about a month ago—just before I was ill.

" I have come to tell you something. Though I have not called myself exactly an atheist, my creed was the next thing to atheism. I have denied the existence of a spiritual world and of a future state for the soul. Always I have said that unless a special revelation should come to myself, I would not believe. The revelation has come however ! It is certainly true. There is a spiritual world—there is a future state. I confess it. I am convinced at last."

The fact is, his clairvoyante, it appears, is visited by the rapping-spirits—he himself had heard three raps so loud that they made him leap ; and intelligent communications were conveyed so—and articulate voices. There was " involuntary writing " too. Well—I was rather cold about it, you will be surprised to hear perhaps. To my mind, the man was somewhat hasty, after having heard in vain the mystical knockings at all the doors and windows of the universe his whole life long to come round suddenly through a rap on a door by means of a clairvoyante. Robert insists that he's a " humbug." I am not sure of this by any means, but I won't *swear* to the contrary —and I think that these things, wherever they occur, should be scrupulously tested before they are received. I *know* that they do occur, but about this particular instance, I don't *know*. Mr. Kirkup is deaf, and though a man of great intelligence, he is not philosophical in his modes of carrying on experiment. We shall know in time. The rapping spirits when they once

get admission, increase in power. A few solitary rappings will not satisfy me. The whispering voices are not common in America even. I suspend my opinion therefore about the Kirkup manifestations. Tell Arabel that Peter Parley is not a believer—except I suppose in the facts. I understand that he believes in neither God nor spirit. As to his daughter's experience, that's resolvable "*vibrations of the brain*" ! ! ! Unbelieving men will step over this trench too !

. . . Robert has been frantic about the Crimea. The accounts turn one sick—and yet out of all this turning up of the fetid ground, will result, I hope, a better system of drainage. A little humiliation will teach us that we are not perfect, and that our administration is one of the most corrupt in Europe. How well and magnanimously the French have behaved ! Their newspapers touch most delicately and forbearingly on our errors in organization, covering us with admiration upon other points. So different from the bearing of the Americans—who have been most insolent, both in public documents and private conversation. They are as jealous as possible of the alliance with France—which is in fact an inconvenient thing for them, and excludes them from a great deal of piratical annexation.

I am very busy with my poem ["Aurora Leigh"], but have got on slowly lately of course. I shall feel nervous about it, I believe.

Many military men stationed at Malta send their families to the Baths of Lucca for the summer—but this would be hard for you to do, I fear—and Malta is very hot in the summer. So anxious I shall be to hear of you. Write—and bid Arabel write. Entreat her not to overwork herself, as I *see* she does. What a time since I heard of dear Trippy. One misfortune I *have* heard of—yes, about my dear kind friend Miss Mitford. But it is gain to her.

I say to Penini sometimes—I wonder if Altham has for breakfast—now fried eggs—now a turkey leg—now a cutlet ! (Ferdinando always providing luxuries for Penini !) I dare say you would be shocked at such an idea.

May God bless you dearest dear Henrietta. Best love to Surtees from us both—and kisses to the treasures.

BA.

60

Relief at Altham's recovery—Future care and education—Opera of the monkeys—Spelling and self pity—Meeting in London imperilled—Work on "Aurora Leigh"—R. B.'s poems magnificent—Visitors: young men take to R. B.—A Self Admirer—F. Tennyson and music—Weather and better health—Alfred writes from Marseilles—Bonnets.

Florence,
April 27, 1855.

MY EVER DEAREST HENRIETTA,

I have a letter from Arabel pulling at my elbow, but really I must write to you this time to congratulate you tenderly and truly on your escape at last—absolute I trust in God—from so many ills and fears. Oh—I know what it is to hear the dreadful silence that comes into the house from the hushing of one silver voice in it! that is too dreadful! And though *you* had another child to talk—still nothing make amends for Altham. I understand too well—but I don't compare our evils at all. There was nothing to apprehend reasonably about Penini, who in fact never *is* ill—this is the first time for a year that we have had recourse to Dr. Harding for him; and this was simply the effect of an accident, which passed with the cause of irritation. I was horribly alarmed without any reason at all, said Dr. Harding,—and he proved his case by the event certainly.

Well—your own treasure of an Altham is getting stronger and stronger, I do hope. To hear of your recovery of the quiet of home, and the opportunities of fresh air for him, filled me with satisfaction both for him and you. And you mean to be very prudent for the future about teaching—don't you? For his life's sake you must and will. Remember that his INTELLECT *as well as health* will be bettered ultimately by the perfect repose now.

. . . Over-exercise the brain too early, and the probable consequence is fever—with convulsions as a close. I tell you plainly that you may know and understand. Oh—I would not of course, let him forget his reading—but so little is needful for that, dearest dear Henrietta! a quarter of an hour spent on it.

See how I love you, that I dare to be so frank to you. And you won't be angry, you say. Of course he is your own child, and you will act according to your own convictions of right and wrong. Only, I think it right to share with you the instructions which I have received from instructed and experienced persons. . . .

The other day Penini came to tease me about going to the " Opera of the monkeys " again. Monkeys and dogs act in an open, day theatre here, and he has been there once with Ferdinando and Wilson in such a state of ecstasy, talking and screaming in Italian, till the audience accepted him as a part of the performance. By the way, a jeweller from the Ponte Vecchio turned and asked Ferdinando whose child he was.

" His master's," Ferdinando said.

" Then you live with an Italian."

" No, with an Englishman."

" And the child speaks Italian so ? *ma pare impossibile.*"

Peni is quite as fluent in one language as another. . . .

I complained lately that he who writes so well spells so badly that he is forced to have me at his elbow for every word. I insisted he should go to the table and write some words by himself. He was very unwilling : but up he comes in a minute with something written in his best way. What do you think it was ?

" Poor Little Penini ! " I was quite touched. It sounded so like the bleating of a lamb left alone. . . .

Arabel puts me into a great fright by what she intimated concerning the danger of Wimpole Street turning out suddenly into the country. Now, if *that* is done before we go to London, we won't go at all. What's the use of going ? We shall move north in some part of May—but not the earliest. So much we have to do. Robert and I are swallowed up of work. He will be ready to begin printing in the summer. Perhaps I shall be later. I don't wind up my poem yet, though it amounts to above six thousand lines. Arabel asks me if it's a tale. Why surely I told her so long and long ago. Yes—a tale—but a good deal besides adventure. I am anxious about it.

Robert's poems* are magnificent, and will raise him higher than he stands. We are up early working, working. Penini's lessons I never neglect—then I write.—Then dinner—then I criticise Robert's MSS. Altogether I have scarcely breath for reading.

Also, we have had people here too often lately—several men having brought us letters—among them Lord Fordwich, Lord Cowper's son, and Lady Palmerston's grandson—a very gentlemanly unassuming young man, and intelligent up to a certain point. It was necessary to pay him attention and he *took* to Robert apparently, as young men often do. Heaps of *galette* (commonly called knead cakes) he annihilated here. Sir William ——'s son too—who mesmerized me into deep sleep by his miraculous stupidity, and commonplace. Then a Mr. Harrison, a cousin of Wordsworth's, whom I like better so far. Mr. Norton we don't like half as much as I fancied we might. He is constantly on a pedestal, turning round on one heel before a glass, absorbed in self-contemplation. . . . Mr. Tennyson, who is " fanatico per la musica," has been having music all the winter—the best music, German chiefly—and quite an orchestra of professional people to play it—*fourteen* at once. At first he had it in the morning, but lately, it has been in the evening on account of convenience. How you would enjoy it, Henrietta. I have been there once, but had to miss the last occasion because of the wind. I hope to go again on Saturday. Mr. Tennyson says he likes Florence chiefly for the advantages of having as much music as you please with very moderate means. Once when he lived at a villa, he had a full opera orchestra to go out there and play to him—him alone, in his elbow-chair. That was a princely luxury, wasn't it ? Dear Mr. Tennyson—music is all that he cares for, he says, between this and the second coming of the Lord,—which he looks for sedulously. But his Italian wife says—" Quantunque Gesù venga, io voglio vedere Parigi."

During the whole of this month we have had the divinest weather possible—like July weather in England when it's warm. . . . and for the last three sundays, the weather has

* *Men and Women*, published later in this year.

admitted of my going to church. Everybody admires at me for looking so well. How can I ever hope to be pitied, I who am always dying and it makes no difference? I am really peculiarly well just now—sprouting green with cod's liver oil, and up to anything as to spirits. Hard work is excellent for the spirits under all circumstances. . . .

Tell me how bonnets are worn in England? Dropping off behind? Can nobody wear anything else? I and Punch resisted this unnatural and most uncomfortable fashion as long as we could; and now that tyrant Robert insists on my "wearing hats like other people." Really it diminishes my happiness in life, and I owe an immense grudge to the Empress Eugénie for tormenting me so, just because she likes to show her own beautiful face!

Love to dear Surtees, and the brace of darlings. Say how you are your own dear self, and write soon and fully. Love me. Robert's love with that of your own attached

BA.

61

London, 1855; land sickness and sea sickness—Arabel looks elegant —Her brothers—Regrets Henrietta had been in London during the winter—Visitors—Hume.

David Dunglass Hume (or Home) was the astonishing wonder-worker who stood for "Sludge the Medium."

London,
July 13, 1855.

MY BELOVED HENRIETTA,

We arrived only yesterday at three in the morning! Imagine in what a condition! Tired as I was however, I read your letter before I undressed. We couldn't break bread, we were so tired—we had taken something at Folkestone, (after a hideous, rolling, heaving passage of two hours—even *I* was sick) and had just force to tumble into bed and remember the people who loved us. Thank you, dearest Henrietta for burning a little love (like a pastille that takes away bad smells) to make me happier in getting to England. In spite of my

dearest Arabel, and you, there's always a weight on my heart when I arrive. The land-sickness is worse than the sea's.

Arabel looks to my eyes wonderfully well—quite brilliant. (Wilson says she never saw her looking so well in her life.)—in a Parisian bonnet—and as if she had never been to the "Refuge" in her life. She considers my astonishment at her degree of elegancy, as very little complimentary,—but really, (the word must be spoken) she is altogether radiant and *pretty*. And so Robert thinks. It has made my heart spring up like a flower to see her face. Henry is thinner, I think. George looks very well; and these are all I have seen yet from Wimpole Street. Penini has taken a great passion of love for Arabel—which pleases me.

I am delighted to have such good accounts of dear little Altham, and of you all. I wish you could be sent (militarily) into the neighbourhood of London, and perhaps it may be—I wish too with all my heart (but that's vain) that you hadn't come here last winter. I was in a tremendous state of malignity and misgiving at the time, I do remember.

To-morrow we breakfast with Mr. Kenyon—to meet half America and a quarter of London. Mrs. Sartoris came to see us yesterday. As to Hume—we shall see *him*, and I will tell you. He's the most interesting person to me in England out of Somersetshire, and 50 Wimpole Street.

. . . Our dear love with you both and your darlings. May God bless you. I feel so much nearer to you after all—and the feeling *is* so delightful.

Your ever, ever affectionate BA.

62

Oppression of London—Country visits refused—Hume and letter from Lytton—Spirit hands and music—R. B. and Hume's humbug—Twaddle, no bar—A Royal Commission suggested to investigate—Write on any other subject—Family items.

For Mr. Lytton, see Letter 49.

London,
Aug. 17, 1855.

MY DEAREST DEAR HENRIETTA,

I know I am behaving just infamously to you. The truth is I have been beside myself with one thing and another

—occupied above all in hating and detesting this London which hangs weights on my very soul and sinks me to the very bottom of things. Dear, I am beginning to lose hope now about seeing you—with the rest. It has been a most uncomfortable and unprofitable visit to England—except for Arabel's face, and that Robert's book is partly printed. If I *could* go to you, you would not need ask me. The joy of seeing you, dearest, and the two treasures—what pleasure it would be? We have been asked—(let me count the " wheres " to you—) we have been asked to Wiltshire, to Derbyshire, to Sussex, to Hertfordshire, to Herefordshire, to Yorkshire and the isle of Wight—(not to Mr. Kenyon's, though—only to Alfred Tennyson's !) and we have had to say " no, no, no " everywhere. I should have liked rather the visit to Knebworth, Sir Edward Lytton's,—but we said there also, but " no." The obstacles were on all sides.

And you, dearest Henrietta, have been unwell ! My Penini is looking as pale as possible in this heavy London air, and if you saw him you would not think him worthy of the popular applause at Marseilles or any-where beside. Tell me of Altham. We were all in admiration before his letter. . . .

Dear B. [Aunt Bell] was very kind to me this time of her being in London, and it gave me great pleasure and comfort to have seen her a little. I wish it had been for longer.

She and you both want to hear the results of our seeing Hume—so I will tell you—on the condition though, that when you write to me you don't say a word on the subject—because it's a *tabooed* subject in this house—Robert and I taking completely different views, and he being a good deal irritated by any discussion of it. I think it may satisfy you more, under these circumstances, to read a letter which Mr. Lytton wrote to me. He is impartial and very intelligent—saw the manifestations at Ealing two days before we did, which he here describes. I have copied it out for your use and B.'s. Show it to her—will you ?—only begging her not to name the subject in any letter to this house, for the reason I have given you.

We did not see quite as much as Mr. Lytton did—but we were touched by the invisible, heard the music and raps, saw the table moved, and had sight of the hands. Also, at the request of the medium, the spiritual hands took from the table a garland which lay there, and placed it upon my head. The particular hand which did this was of the largest human size, as white as snow, and very beautiful. It was as near to me as this hand I write with, and I saw it as distinctly. I was perfectly calm! not troubled in any way, and felt convinced in my own mind that *no spirit belonging to me* was present on the occasion. The hands which appeared at a distance from me I put up my glass to look at—proving that it was not a mere mental impression, and that they were subject to the usual laws of vision. These hands seemed to Robert and me to come from under the table, but Mr. Lytton saw them rise out of the *wood of the table*—also he tells me (which is not mentioned in the enclosed paper) that he saw a spiritual (so called) arm, elongate itself as much as two yards across the table and then float away to the windows, where it disappeared. Robert and I did not touch the hands. Mr. Lytton and Sir Edward *both did*. The feel was warm and human—rather warmer in fact than is common with a man's hand. The music was beautiful.

Mr. Hume was staying at Ealing when we saw him, at a private house—the residence of a rich solicitor whose wife is a friend of Mrs. Jameson and her sisters. Robert acquits the whole family of collusion, believes in their veracity, but cries out against Hume's *humbugging*. Oh! It is difficult to convince any man (even my Robert) against his will.

I think that what chiefly went against the exhibition, in Robert's mind, was the trance at the conclusion during which the medium talked a great deal of much such twaddle as may be heard in any fifth rate conventicle. But according to my theory (well thought-out and digested) this does not militate at all against the general facts. It's undeniable, and has been from first to last, that if these are spirits, many among them talk prodigious nonsense, or rather most ordinary commonplace.

For my own part I am confirmed in all my opinions. To me it was wonderful and conclusive; and I believe that the medium present was no more *responsible* for the things said and done, than I myself was. Mr. Hume has now gone to Italy. The "hands" meantime are seen by others—and lights are seen. . . .

You may be quite sure that these things are developing themselves, even here in England, more and more, though the secret of them is kept in order to avoid the derision of the sceptical public. Lord Stanley said to Sir Edward Lytton, a few days back, that the government should appoint a committee of investigation so as to get as far as possible at the facts.

Read all this (will you?) to dear B., with my very best love. A very little patience, and we shall not speak such things in a whisper: for *it is but the beginning*. Never mind sending me back Lytton's letter—I only send you the copy.

Write to me darling Henrietta on every *other* subject you can think of. Alfred seems very happy now, and may God grant that the happiness last. We are wondering whether Papa will go to the coast—if on the route to Paris, we would follow them there, and it would be good for Penini, and pleasant on every account.

I think of *you*, and breathe *your way*, hoping you may feel my love.

Your ever attached

BA.

63

Henrietta and Altham coming—Mr. Barrett proposes a family visit to Ramsgate and even Paris—R. B. ready to go also—Wilson to set up with Ferdinando; troublesome change.

13 Dorset Street, London,
Aug. 21, 1855.

MY VERY DEAREST HENRIETTA,

You are a darling, and Surtees is an angel, and altogether it's the best news I have had since I touched English ground. (My native soil *is* seldom propitious to me!)

Dearest Henrietta I accept you gratefully, however clipped of your wings and glories (meaning Surtees and Mary) and shall have the greatest joy in seeing you, dear, dear!

But now—Arabel and I have something to leave to your decision.

Only the morning, after I had just begun to fine down a little from the obstreperous joy of looking to see you, in comes Arabel to say that papa had proposed to them all "*to take a house at Ramsgate, and after a time, if any of them should like to go to Paris where there is so much to see! (fancy Papa!) why they might go.*"

Upon which Robert agrees, as he said he would, (there are good things about Robert too) to remove in a fortnight or so to Ramsgate—in order to enjoy the rest of Arabel—and afford some advantages to Penini. Afterwards we shall carry off Arabel to Paris, I hope, in great joy and triumph.

Now what we want you to consider is this—Will you come to London as you propose? or will you rather wait a fortnight and go to the sea? You should live with us of course. Well, then, Arabel and I say—consider the immense advantage of sea-air for Altham! For my own part, I expect a full crop of roses in my Penini's cheeks from the influence of it.

Now, Henrietta, do you and Surtees think it quietly over. I believe *you* are not well, though you don't name yourself in this letter. A fortnight or so's sea air might re-instate you both. But you must decide as dear Surtees shall think best—and however that may be, I am very very grateful to him, tell him with my right sisterly love, for sparing you to me. It is most kind, most kind. . . .

What joy to see you and dear little Altham! Oh—Peni was about to write to him, being delighted with his letter. (How well the darling writes!) Peni is enchanted at the thought of having him to play with. Write.

Your own attached

Ba.

64

Ramsgate overcrowded—Hunt for lodgings—Arabel's "romantic" vow.

"Ocky" is E. B. B.'s youngest brother, Octavius.

13 Dorset Street, London,
Aug. 23, 1855.

EVER DEAREST HENRIETTA,

I write in a state of distraction—people pulling all ways with all manner of wicked devices. But Arabel has been here and leaves me instructions to exhort you to suspend your decision for a day or two. Ramsgate, it seems, is too full of London citizens, to admit us unless we took lodgings in the fishermen's boats. There's a doubt then where to go to—and the young men seem to me to pull in different directions, so as to make a conclusion difficult.

I love you and yearn to see you dearest dear Henrietta. My love to that kindest Surtees.

Ocky has gone to Sandgate and other places to see about houses. Arabel *swears* that if he take a house where *I* cannot follow, she will not leave London, but live *incognita* in a room at Trippy's. Never say there's no romance in the world.

Your ever affectionate

BA.

65

Difficulties in way of Henrietta coming—Eastbourne for Ramsgate—Plans.

Henrietta was out of health, and the visit, either to London or the seaside, was subsequently given up. Ramsgate being impossible, the Barretts went off to Eastbourne. The Brownings were left behind in London, but expected to follow them to Eastbourne a fortnight later. However, their funds ran short; they could not manage the extra expense, and would not accept Surtees Cook's generous offer to make up the deficiency (Letter 69), so that E. B. B. and her sister should meet at the seaside. And as the alternative of a visit to London would have done Henrietta no good, the hoped-for meeting was deferred till the next summer.

London,
Monday, Aug. 27, 1855.

I can't wait any longer for Arabel (who is coming, she has sent me a message to say) to write, and I can't let your dear letter pass in silence during a day, my ever dearest Henrietta. So here is just a word ! . . .

Perhaps, if I were you, I should be afraid, and not come. And yet the railroad is not fatiguing—and you might be even invigorated by the change of air. Who knows ? and who dares decide ? Certainly it is not Ba.

Dear, the Wimpole street plan is settled thus. A house is taken at Eastbourne, and they all go on thursday. So I lose Arabel on thursday, and how I shall bear London afterwards (unless you help me) I don't know. We shall probably follow her on monday week or so—that is, a fortnight from to-day. . .

May God bless you dearest dear Henrietta. How deeply I am touched by your sacrifice of dear Surtees (for a week) to me.

Your ever attached

BA.

66

Arabel goes ahead to Eastbourne—Overworked at the Refuge—Visitors—Spirit manifestations to Mr. Jarves—R. B. will only believe if he becomes a medium.

About this time the popular mind was agitated, not only by spirit-manifestations, but by Dr. Cumming's preaching of the imminent end of the world.

London,
Thursday, Aug. 30, 1855.

MY VERY DEAREST HENRIETTA,

You will have set me down as the most ungrateful of women. I missed the post these two days back, and even now I am driven to the edge of a precipice for to-day and shall have barely time to tell you that I have lost my Arabel and that London is a worse London to me than ever. She went away to-day at two to Eastbourne where a house is taken for ten weeks, and we shall follow in about ten days.

You see I almost conclude that if you decide on coming it will rather be to Eastbourne than to London, both for Altham's sake and Arabel's whom otherwise you would miss. As for me I am ready to pick up any crumb that shall fall from your table—and a thankful dog shall I be afterwards.

Arabel went away in an agony lest you should think her unkind. I say you will be so absorbed in thinking *me* unkind, that there will be no time for hard thoughts of others. Sad as I am at losing Arabel I am satisfied she has gone—her headaches having come in a crowd lately from incessant labour at the Refuge.

Mrs. Ormus Biddulph asked us to dinner on monday—but we don't go. To-morrow evening however we go to Mrs. Sartoris, to meet Frederick Tennyson ; and last night, she, the Tennysons, Mr. Forster, and Mr. Fox (of Oldham) spent the evening with us. Wimpole street sent knead cakes—and grapes and melon, which George gave in his kindness.

I have had an extraordinary " spiritual " letter from Mr. Jarves—America—The spirits begin now to carry material objects from one place (out of the house) to another. They make themselves *partially visible* very often. Mr. Jarves has become a medium himself—has the knocking sounds at night, and other manifestations. A chair in his father's dining room raised itself (without being touched by a finger) to the top of the table, and back again—and the table itself floating up into the air above all their heads. His watch was wound up without a key and went forty eight hours &c. &c. &c. He comes back to Florence in September. I think you know who he is—the author of a book on Art, the son of one of the most wealthy men in America. He himself is very rich—and what is more important to the subject, perfectly *veracious*. Even Robert admits this.

By the way—the subject is still *in suspense* in this house. Some of these days perhaps Robert will be a medium himself, and then he will believe. Till then I shall never stir the question more. . . .

Your ever attached

Ba.

67

All goes wrong, cannot manage Eastbourne—Doubt if Henrietta should venture to London ; they only go as far as Paris—London an empty nutshell.

13 Dorset Street, London,
Sept. 7, 1855.

My ever dearest Henrietta,

Every thing goes wrong to me in this England—and I can't even make the two ends of our loves (yours and mine) meet comfortably. Dearest Henrietta, it is discovered that we can't manage Eastbourne. The worst pang, almost, of this painful business, is the thought of having led you on and put you off—blowing bubble-dreams out of such brittle mere tobacco-pipes. Forgive us—forgive *me*. I pay for it all in my own bitter disappointment.

Poor Arabel and I have *both* been crying our eyes out, it seems by her letter this morning—but I will dry *my* eyes to look at you—if you should still fancy it worth while to come to see me alone here in London. But, dearest, *is* it worth while ? Almost I think it is not—considering the fatigue to you, and Arabel away ! Dearest, I say to myself and to you, that in fact it is not worth your while—and that it will be wiser for you to wait a few months longer, over the winter, when you will have me here again, if we should be all, by God's will, alive. We go only as far as Paris, you know, and I shall take with me for comfort the knowledge of your affectionateness and of what sacrifices you were ready to make (even of the light of dear Surtees's countenance !) for the sake of a few days with *me*. So don't come—rather let me kiss you with the lips of my soul—which I do this moment, tenderly, gratefully—praying God to bless you and yours (not the least, dear Surtees, who had been so *unforgetably* kind), and to bring us together under His brighter stars next year early.

For the rest, what is there to tell you ? London is an empty nutshell—just good to be thrown away. Not a creature in it ! . . . .

Your ever affectionate

Ba.

68

Dissuades Henrietta from coming—Bayfords' and other invitations refused, except Forster's—London empty, leaves time for some work.

13 Dorset Street, London,
Sept. 10, 1855.

How good you are to me, dearest dear Henrietta. I am touched to the heart by it. I wish I could feel as strongly that it was clearly safe for you to come. . . .

I won't think too much therefore of your *absolutely coming this day week*—dearest—when you feel so unwell. . . .

The Augustus Bayfords called on us the other day; and this morning there's a note to ask us very kindly to dine with them. Of course I write to refuse. We never dine out, and now less than ever,—(though by the way we did do it en grand secret at Mr. Forster's to meet young Lytton two days ago.) We have so much to do, that we can scarcely turn round. I haven't written a line of my poem since leaving Florence. It's impossible to write or think—and yet, we have lost at last the eternal visitors,—London being fairly emptied.

I write out of breath with haste—May God bless you and yours. If you come—how pleasant to compare notes about our boys! If you come say if Robert shall meet you and at what hour.

Your ever and ever affectionate

BA.

69

Prudent renunciation of visit—Generous offer not really needed; R. B. takes fright at flies—Death of Uncle Richard Butler.

For Surtees' offer, see Letter 65.

13 Dorset Street,
Sept. 13, 1855.

MY EVER BELOVED HENRIETTA,

Your letter comes and grieves me—and yet satisfies me. See how such a thing can be! In fact I do approve altogether the conclusion you have come to, however I may and must suffer from it. I have felt afraid from the beginning

—afraid of the injury to you, afraid of the pain and responsibility on my own part. Really there would have been a risk. I couldn't shut my eyes to it. So you are quite right, quite right, dearest dear Henrietta. My house of cards is down with a breath—but the breath came in a word of perfect good sense. Also one steady wide-awake joy remains to me from my dream—the proof of how much you were inclined to sacrifice to your love of me—and also the proof of dear Surtees's kindness.

After thanking you both for this, where can I find breath for the rest of our gratitude for your generous goodness to us? Dear—I would shrink from no sort of obligation to you: I love you far too much for that. But the truth is there is no sort of need. Robert's prudence is apt to take fright at the flies. He sees afar off what may be—how a black cloud comes up in the wind, and how if we lock up the umbrellas we shall be sure to feel the want of them in the rain. It's all fear through far-seeing. As for me I am short-sighted—for my happiness. I am never afraid, and everything always turns out well I observe, just as if I, too, had been very ill with spasmodic terrors.

. . . Are you not sorry for Arlette? Fatherless and motherless now. We shall go into mourning of course. It is a liberation for poor uncle Richard, who has been for so many weeks scarcely sensible or perceiving.

Somebody comes in—and I can't wait, because of the post going. God bless you and yours,

Your ever, ever attached

BA.

70

A jacket pattern—Pen goes to Arabel at Eastbourne; his joys and sorrows—Gratitude to Henrietta—Mr. Kenyon coming; may wait for him—R. B.'s book printed—Pearl necklace found—Hopes for next year—Tennyson reads "Maud"—Arabel says she prefers R. B.—Smoking—Haste—Henrietta enviable—"Torn to pieces"—Can't please everyone.

The dedication of "Men and Women" is the "One Word More."

For the lost necklace, now recovered, see Letter i (1846).

Tennyson's visit is more fully described in a letter to Mrs. Martin, Letters ii, 213.

13 Dorset Street,
Wednesday, Oct. 3, 1855.

My ever dearest Henrietta,

You shall have the pattern of the jacket to-morrow, but it is the old Penini fashion. . . .

What will you say to me when I tell you, Henrietta, that I have let this precious child go away from me to Eastbourne with Arabel! Am I an unnatural mother? Arabel came on that tuesday (last week) and hazarded her reputation and the parental final reputation by staying in London till saturday. Well, she asked me for Peni—and I, unstrung and overcome by gratitude and love for her, said he might go if he liked. Oh—there seemed little fear of his liking. He refused all day and every day. But on saturday—there was something about a little dog which was going to Eastbourne, and which he was wanted to take care of—some temptation about shells and the sea—and suddenly he said he would go. In the greatest state of excitement and dignity of a carpet bag, he set off. Robert took him to the train. . . . He seems to have had alternate raptures and despondencies. . . . So he comes to-day. . . . My own treasure! I had a letter from Arabel this morning to say so, with a line from himself at the top—

"From your dearest friend who sends you five thousand kisses." Think of my *dearest friend!* I wonder when you will let Altham go away from you. Do you feel inclined? But I could refuse my dearest Arabel nothing when she had been so over-good in coming. How could I?

Ah yes—If I had had you too! But I hold fast the thought of how you would have come—how all that love could ask (and more) your love was ready to give. And I am steadily glad, glad, that you did not, after all, come at this inevitable risk.

Mr. Kenyon comes on monday—he has written most affectionately. —— —— has just been here too, to persuade us to stay a few days longer—not to go on wednesday as we

proposed—for the sake of seeing a little of dear Mr. Kenyon. Robert is out: but I think it probable he may decide on remaining a few additional days.

His book is printed and will be out at the end of October or beginning of November,—"Men and Women," in two volumes—dedicated to *me* in a poem at the close. You will have a copy sent to you.

By the way—Arabel and I found your pearl necklace to our immense satisfaction, at the bottom of the jewel-case. Oh, so glad I am for your sake—and also for mine—as I was so very vexed to think that you profited in nothing by my intention. Arabel has the thing in her keeping for you. We did not like to run the risk of the post and send it.

Dearest Henrietta, if you are sent to Aldershot, it will be convenient for London—and you will have positively to come here next summer. . . .

The Laureate took us by surprise last week while Arabel was here—dined with us two successive days, and spent the mornings, and threw us in the nights. He read us the whole of Maud, and exquisitely—the voice hangs in my ear still. We dined and smoked together and were so happy and affectionate as possible; and I didn't get to bed on the second day till three o'clock in the morning. So that altogether I nearly died of the joy of it. But I seriously love Tennyson.

And yet Arabel says she likes Robert better. One of the reasons being that Robert doesn't smoke pipes—no, nor cigars, let me add.

Sometimes I have exhorted him to smoke, by the bye. It would do him good occasionally.

If you could see the vehement haste I am writing in. We are overwhelmed with last things to do on last days. May God bless you, dearest! I envy you all—would give a great deal to find no rest! Oh—if I could—what felicity!

So never look for pity from this side of the world, you miserable enviable creature! . . .

Your ever attached

Ba.

I have not been able to get down yet to Surtees' mother. If you saw how I am torn to pieces. I have offended twenty people at least since we came to England—from mere *impotence* to do what I desire.

71

The necklace is really hers—Waiting for Mr. Kenyon—Parting only as far as Paris.

London,
Monday, Oct. 8, 1855.

My beloved Henrietta,

In the first place—one word for a million—I shall be hurt and grieved to the marrow of my heart, if you *speak again* about the necklace. It was given to you before my marriage. It is yours and not mine. The worth of the thing I know nothing of—it is nothing to me except for your sake. Very likely it may not be worth as much as you suppose : but whether or not, does not change the act of its belonging to you, Henrietta. Now, if you mean to vex me, you will say a word to this—not though it mean as little as " thank you "—the whole transaction belonging to a bygone time, and by no means to the present. I am only delighted that you should have my gift, (such as the trifle is) and that it wasn't appropriated by a dishonest housemaid as Wilson and I were unjust enough to suspect.

Dearest, dear Henrietta, it is very dear of you to care so for missing me. It's sad for *me*—yet with all my regrets I cannot wish that you had come. The decision was too wise to be regretted, dear. Then, I can't feel this time as if I were going from you—no, indeed. Paris is only like Norfolk—scarcely so far. And I shall be back again in a few months—you will see. Meanwhile, if you are really sent to Aldershot, how convenient that will be ! Oh—I shall anxiously wait to hear where you are sent.

We don't leave town on wednesday—perhaps on saturday—perhaps on monday even—later, *no*. The fact is Mr. Kenyon comes to London to-day, and we are entreated to wait a little for his sake. . . .

Your ever affectionate Ba.

72

Evil days and yellow satin—Seeing few people, not even Lady Elgin—"Men and Women": excellence and translation—Milsand calls the poems "superhuman"—Unable to write—Peni's lessons—No French servant for his French—Empress Eugénie—Spirits—Is not in Paris, but the wilderness—George Sand's Memoirs vexatiously dull—Fears for Arabel—Home wishes—Peace expected soon.

These unsatisfactory rooms had been taken for them by a friend who was dazzled by the yellow satin upholstery.

Madame Mohl (*see* page 147), who was described as a charming mixture of French vivacity and English originality, presided over a Paris salon for nearly forty years, having learnt the art from Mme. Récamier.

Paris, 102 Rue de Grenelle, Faubourg S. Germain,
Nov. 15, 1855.

My ever dearest Henrietta,

I can't bear to think of having been here so long without sending you one word—and yet there has been so little to write of except discomfort, that it was only merciful not to pull hard at your sympathy. You know from Arabel how we fell upon evil days and yellow satin sofas in the Rue de Grenelle—due east in aspect, and with draughts flying about like frantic birds. I caught cold accordingly and was not well, being in an irritable state of chest through London. Now I am all but right again however, and if we can but get into a comfortable apartment, we may unpack our boxes and not cough or sigh any more.

Penini has gone to-day to see the emperor's carriages and other glories connected with the closing of the Exhibition. Up to now, Paris hasn't been Paris,—though out first fortnight was (until quite the end) one sweep of exquisite weather; and though, in spite of our discomfort indoors, I had begun to take heart and believe again in blue skies and intense sunshine. But we have been lying *perdus* in our hole, hiding from the faces of men and women, and seeing nobody except such as we fell upon by chance and couldn't help speaking to—Sir Edward Lytton for instance—and Rossetti, the chief of the pre-Raffaelites in England,—and Madame Mohl, and Mrs.

Sartoris, who is here and came and found us out. Robert has not made his way to dear Lady Elgin even, though he saw Lady Charlotte and was urged to do so. In fact we are in that amiable frame of mind which indisposes people to think of anybody but themselves. But *you* are *we*. I do believe I have offended Arabel by not writing sooner. She won't answer my letter now. Really I am horribly used by everybody. Write to me at least to say how you are, Henrietta, for I am seeing *black* wherever I look, and it is not pleasant.

I hope you will receive duly your "Men and Women" which the publishers were directed to send you. Though the book was only published on saturday we hear good news of the promise of success, "the trade" having "subscribed" (as they call it) largely—that is—having made large orders—so that the expenses were covered after three days. Robert will stand higher than ever through these poems—I am ready to die for them, at the stake, that they are his ablest works. They are making translations of nearly half of them for the "Revue des deux Mondes," and Mr. Milsand told me quietly the other day, that he considered the poems "superhuman"—Mark that! Only superhuman.

As for me, I can't write under our present circumstances of course—all heaped up together. I don't know how my poem is ever to be finished. It's as much as I can do, to get through Peni's lessons. He has finished "Rosamond" in Italian, and is reading "Harry and Lucy." He reads Italian so well that really it is a pretty thing to hear him now. His present ambition is to learn French—but as we haven't a French servant, of course it is more difficult. . . Peni has a black velvet hat and feather—which—they tell me—he pulled from his head and waved in a transport of enthusiasm at the sight of the emperor.

The empress looked pale but beautiful. Young Lytton told me the other day that nothing can be more charming and full of grace than her manner—not royal but charming—as if she entreated your tolerance that she was obliged to be empress. . . .

I have heard some more wonderful things about the spirits

—so extraordinary that I scarcely like repeating them except upon evidence which I have not yet. Think of water-colour drawings being produced by the spirits, and letters written and folded and put into your hand—and this not once, but by hundreds. Sir Edward Lytton told it to me. Mr. Jarves in a minute's talk I had with him, said simply that he himself had attained to hearing and seeing spirits—not the *rapping sounds*, observe, but the *spiritual voices*—which of course demands very high mediumship. The spirits come to him at night and awaken him up—but in the day also. You asked me to tell you what I hear—so I tell you. The manifestations seem deepening and strengthening on all sides, and soon will be too strong for the sceptics and the intolerant. It's a struggle however. Also one must admit that it is natural, this unwillingness to receive facts which militate against generally received opinions.

. . . You think I'm in Paris. And I'm not the least in the world in Paris—but in the wilderness—in the desert—and out of sorts and spirits and comfort, through this detestable yellow satin and its consequences. We have subscribed to a library, and are reading George Sand's memoirs, and even she is dull on purpose to vex me.

. . . No letter again from Arabel to-day ! How vexatious. I am beginning to be really uneasy about her, or papa or some of them. One of the more lively fancies is that she may have gone to that horrible " Refuge " and caught the scarlet fever ! which had taken root there when we were in London. How hard, that I can't have a letter. There seems to be an epidemic silence in England.

Only Robert has had a good letter to-day from his publishers.

. . . Oh, I do trust you are not likely to be turned adrift from your pretty home ! Tell me. Sir Edward Lytton expects peace within a year—but I see no prospects of it. Choose your authority ! Of course you'll choose me.

. . . My best love to my dear kind brother Surtees—(I shall not lightly forget his kindness to me.) Robert's love to both of you. And heaps of kisses to the darlings—

Your ever attached BA.

ROBERT BROWNING, 1859.
From a drawing by F. Talfourd.

73

Delay through writing to Arabel; perhaps neglecting herself—Bad rooms—Criticisms of "Lazarus"—Mrs. Jameson in Paris—Woman-occupation question — R. B.'s first outing — George Sand's memoirs disappoint a naughty world—Lessons—Mourning for children's wear—Mrs. Kinney the objector converted to spiritualism by Hume—Odic water.

The mourning in question was for Uncle Richard Butler (see Letter 69).

Mrs. Kinney, herself a poet, was the mother of the American poet and critic, Edmund Clarence Stedman. Her husband, the Hon. William Burnett Kinney, was minister at the Sardinian court. He afterwards went to Florence to write an historical work, but died before its completion. (See Letters of E. B. B., ii, 244.)

102 Rue de Grenelle, Faubourg S. Germain, Paris,
Dec. 6, 1855.

My ever dearest Henrietta,

I meant to have answered your letter long and long ago—but the time passes—and I had besides to write to Arabel to get rid of a very uneasy feeling about her which still lingers though she calls herself well now. I am sure she neglects herself—I can *not* feel satisfied.

Then our position here is so wretched, that I put off everything till we get clear of it, which we shall do next saturday week, if it pleases God.

Dearest, dear Henrietta, you are to believe that we did you absolute justice, and considered you *right* and *kind* to be frank and tell us your secret mind about Lazarus. And you must do *us* justice, and understand that no want of reverence, much less blasphemy, was intended by that poem, the object of which is in the highest degree reverential and Christian. It is one of my great favorites—(and we have this morning a letter from Mr. Ruskin, author of the Stones of Venice, a most Christian man, calling it his favorite,) and among all the criticisms we have heard, private and public, such an idea as yours seems to have occurred to no one.

The Arabian physician considers the case of Lazarus as

" a case "—represents it as such a man would, who had never heard of Christ before, or conceived of the miracle. It is a view *from without* of the raising from the dead, &c—and shows how this must have impressed the thinkers of the day, who came upon it with wondering, unbelieving eyes, for the first time. The way in which Lazarus is described as living his life after his acquaintance with the life beyond death, strikes me as entirely sublime, I confess. The books are attracting a great deal of notice in both modes, of abuse and laudation. People complain of obscurity, but admit the power and originality to a degree which compensates—setting him above all writers of the day in those respects.

. . . Mrs. Jameson is still here, and my hope is that when she has finished the necessary business which calls her to England, she may return for the winter. I am fond of her more and more. She has taken up the woman-occupation question, and the possibility of using the Sister of charity institution, with modifications on English ground. Also she has been enquiring a good deal into the state of French charities—which are wonderfully organized and most fertile. Here in Paris the cause of the poor is being carried out on all sides. It's a wonderful place—and of Louis Napoleon I think with increasing respect, the more I get at facts.

Robert went out to Mrs. Sartoris's the other evening—the very first evening he has spent out in Paris, in spite of re-iterated invitations. Judge from this how we have lived! We do nothing but smoulder over the fire and read George Sand's memoirs—which disappoint everybody (except me) because they are not wicked as was expected.

. . . Tell me of Altham, and how he gets on—and don't be afraid of being preached at any more, poor dearest Henrietta. You *shan't* be preached at, even though you should teach him Hebrew. Of course you know better than I what the child can bear—and he seems to be well now. Is he reading Frank? and how far is he in it? and how many pages does he generally read? Do you mean that you have really *put* him into mourning? and Mary? such little things for black frocks! I could not have done it under the circumstances certainly;

but then I think I have a peculiar distaste to the putting on of black—more perhaps than is reasonable. I am still wearing it however. I wait for a sign from Arabel to leave it off. . . .

I have had a letter from Mrs. Kinney from Florence—the wife of the American minister at Turin, and a cleverish woman. She used to be just as violent against the spirits as Robert—she raged about them, in fact, till people laughed and wondered why she had such an antipathy to the spiritual world. She exhorted Robert to " find out the trick," and " expose " it, and was furious at the notion of anybody believing. Robert, on his experience in London, wrote to her, which confirmed her of course, and drew out a most resolute letter of " firstly secondly, thirdly, and fourthly," expounding and demonstrating why nobody of sane mind *could* tolerate such gross absurdities : well—Mr. Hume is at Florence as you know : and I have just had a long letter from her—to confess that she had been *wrong*, and that, after having witnessed and examined for herself again and again and again, she and her husband had come to the conclusion that all trickery, as a solution, was utterly impossible. Certainly if Mrs. Kinney is convinced, we may despair of no one. She is veracious and just ; and Robert himself says that he esteems her more for her candour in writing this last letter. The phenomena in Florence appear to be of an astonishing character. A polish princess was communicated with in her own language. The most private circumstances were referred to in messages from departed friends to the Kinneys and others. I can't tell you all. The raps, which spelled out some sentences to Mrs. Kinney, were made on Mr. *Kinney's knee*—he sitting the farthest off from the medium of all in the room. Mr. Kinney adroitly and rapidly, while he felt the raps, dropped his hand on his knee, and, there, came into sudden contact with Another Hand—the spiritual ! The persons present, said Mrs. Kinney, had all their hands in sight—and the medium sat the farthest off. She watched everything. Young Mrs. Trollope's gown was blown out. This séance was at the Trollopes' house. The spirits said they could influence Mrs. Kinney's health beneficially—and they desired her to provide herself with a bottle

of distilled water—which young Powers ran for to the chemist's while the séance went on at Mr. Powers' house. When the water came, Mrs. Kinney tasted it. Of course it was pure water. Left on the table. In a little time, to the eyes of all, there plainly arose a *vapour from the water*. Then she tasted it again, and there was a peculiar aromatic flavour. The spirits called it " *Odic* water," and desired her to keep it in a dark place and take a tea spoon of it every day—which she *does*. She says—" Think of me the sceptic ! " But poor Hume is very ill. I am promised a letter from —— —— on the spiritual subject. I would rather hear, though, from Mr. Powers, in whose acumen I have confidence.

God bless you all. Dear love to Surtees and the darlings. Robert's best goes with mine to all of you.

Your ever attached

Ba.

74

New Year letter—Peni and his presents—More gifts for both—Weathers cold and discomfort in a miraculous way.

The " detestable house " was that in the Rue de Grenelle with the yellow satin curtains (Letter 72).

3, Rue du Colysée,
Avenue des Champs Elysées, Paris,
Jany. 1, 1856.

My dear dearest Henrietta,

Here is the first of the year, and it shan't go without words from me, (thoughts would go at any rate) to say how I wish you happiness upon happiness—all the old joy and love preserved, and new joy and love added—how I wish it to you and yours, to your dear Surtees, and to the darlings of both of you ! May God bless you all. Love me a little.

I had your letter on Christmas day. Thank you, dearest, for the pleasure I had in it. I had my full holiday in the sight of Penini's face at the sight of his Christmas presents. Robert had gone out the evening before and come home in a fiacre with an enormous kitchen, made of iron and stone, so that it will admit of a real fire. This was the object of Peni's

secret ambition—so, in spite of the danger of "fires" &c., we let him have it. Then a dinner-set and knives and forks, complete. And a knapsack. A book of instructions in drawing, too, which will be of more use presently. And a friend of ours brought him a geographical game—pronounced to be "not very amusing." But altogether, Penini prospered. He wanted a "party" very much—only I was not up to it. I don't know how it may be with Altham, but Peni has the most inextinguishable love of dissipation, and to go out and to receive, make his ideas of happiness. . . .

But now comes a new year's gift for him, addressed to me from some anonymous American—a book bound in white vellum and full of fairy tales—very pretty, and very kind. He has gone out to see the great show of new year's gifts which make the Boulevards look like a fair. And here's an orange tree covered with blossoms for me! And here too is Mrs. Sartoris, with an immense bunch of blue violets!

. . . I have been much better lately; and people cry out about my looking so much better. That detestable house and the cold together were enough to kill a stouter heart than mine—but I weather storms in a miraculous way—(walk upon the sea, *though* I cry out!) . . .

Your ever attached

Ba.

75

Birthday letter—Temporary separation from husband—R. B. refuses trip to Holy Land alone—Wishes for a girl—Pen, baby speech, France, Italy and politics—Mr. Phipps and report of Hume's mystery of iniquity—His self-denying ordinance—Deteriorating places—R. B. reads poetry to Lady Elgin.

For these poetry readings, see *Life of Robert Browning*, pp. 16, 200, and *Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, ii, 363.

Lady Elgin was paralysed, unable to speak, but still able to understand. She delighted in these visits from R. B., and also from R. B.'s sister Sarianna, who at this time was staying in Paris, together with her father. Lady Elgin lived on till the beginning of 1860, when the Brownings were in Rome.

3 Rue du Colysée, Paris,
Tuesday, March 4, 1856.

My dearest dear Henrietta,

. . . Dear, I do sympathize with you deeply in this separation from Surtees, which is a real trial under the circumstances. Yes, and would be a trial under any circumstances,—considering the unity of your heart and life. How *I* should bear it I don't know. But duty and necessity together bear one up—and the sense of love itself exalts one and confirms one against the grief of love. May God bless you, I say again. It's the only thing to say. After all it isn't as bad as the Crimea—and you were making up your mind once to the Crimea.

It isn't as bad even as the Holy Land—and I told Robert only yesterday that I would *allow* of his going alone for a few months, I and Penini staying quietly at Florence. Only I must add that he refused point blank, and swore that nothing in the shape of *pleasure* would ever induce him to separate himself from me for a week. So I had just the glory of my generosity—and say nothing of it, if you please.

. . . I do wish I were by you to envy you aloud, and to give you advice about little caps and great preparations. Yes—never yield to the barbarism of bare heads for babies. If Eve had ever been a baby she would have had a skin-cap on her head—or a vine leaf at least. Because it isn't good for a baby's head to be over-heated, is that a reason why it shouldn't wear a light semi-transparent sort of cap, with just a foundation for the official rosette ?

By the way, if I were you, I would persist in wishing for a girl in spite of Surtees. One boy is enough for honour and glory—although I do like so much all you say of Altham, and although my Penini is what he is. But boys in the long run are more troublesome. . . .

Oh, I dare say if I had a younger child and another coming, I should think differently about Peni's speaking plain, as it's called, than I do in my present destitute condition. I grant *that* to *you*, Henrietta.

And you would grant to me that Penini reads French wonderfully. . . .

Peni has great admiration for the French—but for the most part he persists in professing to be an Italian—he tells everybody he's Italian. The airs the child gives himself in talking about all sorts of subjects, are very amusing to us. For instance, while we were at dinner yesterday, Ferdinando who is very anxious about the Peace conferences, was telling us that the report in the streets was, that things were going ill between the great powers. Penini put down his fork and observed with an ineffable gravity and dignity that it was his opinion too.

" Ed io anche lo credo, Ferdinando. Non si fará la pace." Robert and I couldn't help a burst of laughter. The child spoke so earnestly, with that darling baby-face of his ! The " *ed io anche* " was irresistible.

Mr. Phipps (Lord Normanby's brother) called upon us yesterday—(asked for an introduction and came) on his way to London from Florence whence he had just arrived. I think that what he *chiefly* wanted to know us for, was to hear our opinions upon the " spirits " and Hume. He told us the mystery about Hume—the mystery of iniquity which everybody raved about and nobody distinctly specified ; and there turns out to be, just as I supposed, an enormous amount of exaggeration. . . . Altogether he was blameable, and gave sign of a vulgar yankee nature, weak in wrong ways. But there was nothing at all of the criminal character which we all supposed here—and in fact there never has been, says Mr. Phipps. Also it appears that Lord Normanby offered to pay his expenses to England, and that he refused at once—" not choosing to accept money like a pauper." That Lord Normanby did offer such a thing, proves that his opinion of him was not entirely bad. He has now left Florence for Naples, accompanying a Polish family as *tutor*—which sounds extraordinary. Before he agreed to go, he told them, that " probably their object was the advantage of studying the nature of his gifts ; and that therefore it was right for him to tell them that the spirits had announced to him the suspension for a year of all communications." After hearing which they still persisted in forming the engagement. Mr. Phipps is plainly a believer in the manifestations.

I heard through Mrs. Martin a few days since that she had heard from the Hedleys who didn't like Bath at all, and that she was glad of it because " Bath was a deteriorating place." I don't believe much in deteriorating places for people worth a straw—but I should have been surprised if they had liked Bath after being used to better. . . .

Think of Robert going every week to read poetry—Keats to begin with—to that dear Lady Elgin. It's good of him, I think. And she *is* so charmed and glad! Better in health —quite rallying I hope.

May God bless you, dearest. My love to Surtees when you write—and to the other *three*.

Your ever attached

BA.

76

Coming events—Birth of the Prince Imperial—Arabel's disbelief in her reports of this as well as spiritualism—Believers as being " of one-horse-power "—Wishes to be with Henrietta—The children she has not had—Health ; is sprouting in the spring —" Aurora Leigh " ; work ; American publication—Criticisms of Ristori — Monckton Milnes's father refuses an anticipatory peerage—Pen ; drawing Napoleon—Pittance of faults ; sentimentalism—Other people lecture her on his lessons—R. B.'s verdict on Ristori.

Sir James Clark was one of the leading physicians of the day.

3 Rue du Colysée, Paris,
April 11, 1856.

MY EVER DEAREST HENRIETTA,

Arabel cries out to me that I have an ulcerated sore throat—or must have—or ought to have : but I can't cry back to her that I haven't, until I have written to you.

Of course my thoughts are very, very full of you just now. . . . May you be as happy as our empress, but with much less cost—and you will not be expected to have a *scetta* from the gentlemen of the county round your bed, to do you as much harm as she endured. Arabel won't believe a word of any of my affidavits (which were nevertheless entirely trustworthy, and had from medical men and attendants at the

Tuileries and by no vague report) about Napoleon's tears and refusal to eat,—so it is of no use telling that the baby has an enormous head and a quantity of hair, and that it sleeps continually—that the norman nurse complains of the etiquette, and of not being able to dandle and kiss it at will. Arabel won't believe a word of all this—she'll set it down as " spiritual." . . .

Robert and I were so excessively amused the other day by an American visitor who brought us a letter from Florence—a raw intensely American American, who came into the room without gloves and sate down and did the conversation in the manner of the " highest black circles." Of course we threw him on the spirit-subject, and he informed us how all Florence had been " infatuated " &c—but—and, there, he addressed himself to me in a prepossessing manner—" but I observe that believers in these things are usually of *one-horse-power*—" to the extreme amusement of Robert who sate by listening. He thought he was saying something particularly agreeable to me of course. And as he is rather of one-ass power himself, I didn't take the unintended affront much to heart.

Dearest Henrietta I do wish I were with you at this time. If it were summer and we in London I would leave Robert and go to you—it would be comfort to me at least. . . . I envy you—oh, so much ! more than I can say. Penini ought to be a darling, to make up for all the children I should like to have—and really he is ! That, there's no denying. A very little naughty sometimes to show he is mortal. . . .

As for me, Minny is quite right. I have caught no sore throat—and am well otherwise—though not as strong as after an Italian winter. I drove out again the other day to the Bois de Boulogne, and came home tired. One soon takes to sprouting however when the habit of the spring air is formed. And I am really on the right road. We have this house till the fifteenth of June and then go to London.

I am very busy still at my poem—and am in my last book —not in the transcription but the composition. It will be ready by June—and I hear that the American publisher " has the money in hand " for it. Seventy five pounds he proposes,

but it certainly ought to be more—for some ten thousand lines. You will be scandalized by certain parts, and a few things you may like perhaps.

Robert is going to night with Lady Monson to see Ristori at the Italian play. He was at Dickens's last night, and heard her much depreciated by himself and Macready who is in Paris for a few days, while Mrs. Sartoris, Mrs. Jameson and others extol her as of the highest genius. I am very curious to have Robert's opinion on these contraries. Macready called on us, found us at dinner, and comes again. You must know that he rather likes me—Robert of course.

Monckton Milnes has gone home. He told us of his father's refusing the peerage just now—admitting that it was a vexation to himself—and observing that his wife had " borne it very well "—" most women would have made a row about it." In fact nothing can be more selfish than old Milnes's refusal of an honour which was offered entirely on his son's account, as he well knew. He is a very peculiar man, and chose not to be put out of his way by a new crease in his name to please his son—not he !

While I write Peni sits by me drawing a picture of Napoleon which Arabel asks for, and which we have an opportunity of sending—and I hear him say—" Oh—you don't know how beautiful it's beginning to look now, Mama." Peni is very susceptible to the beauty of his own works, whether poems or drawings.

I see that Altham has a mere pittance of faults, and really it is so with Peni. Perhaps his fault presently will be some excess of sentimentalism. What if he runs away with a third love at sixteen ? . . .

Mrs. Erskine was here yesterday and lectured me about Peni just as I lecture you,—and thought an hour and a half much too long for a child of his age, and quoted Sir James Clark upon it—that at seven he should be beginning to learn his letters a few minutes a day. She was shocked at me ! In my own defence I told her that he had asked me the meaning of the word " arithmetic " two days before—which didn't look too learned—did it ?

. . . Robert gives his verdict on Ristori midway between the contending parties. She has sensibility, he says, and not imagination. It's a sort of madness, the admiration for her here. I shall wait to see her in Italy. I would rather meanwhile go to the French players, if I went anywhere.

Oh, Henrietta, I do hope and trust I shall have sight of you in England this year. I must. . . . This peace will piece you up with Surtees, and as the military establishment will be cared for henceforward, I hope there will be no difference for the worse for you. Kiss the darlings for me—and tell dear Surtees with my love that I am sure he will remember to send me the good news I am hungry and thirsty for, without delay. Robert's love to both of you.

May God bless you and love you, my dear dear dearest Henrietta. My heart is full of prayer for you.

Your attached

BA.

77

The new baby—Family names should not be repeated—Mr. Kenyon ill—R. B. offers to nurse him—Edward Kenyon sent for—Arabel's silence—Six words would suffice—Letter comes ; a lesson for Henrietta.

The child was named Edward Altham, Edward being the name of their brother whose sudden death by drowning was an irremediable sorrow to E. B. B.

John Kenyon was on his deathbed, and his brother Edward was sent for. But it was Edward who died first, leaving his fortune to John, Browning's friend, who thus on his deathbed had the disposal of two considerable estates, while " he wanders much at times, and his vision appears troubled."

Paris,
May 7, 1856.

MY EVER BELOVED HENRIETTA,

How good of you to write this dear letter to me when I am sure you could have no strength to throw away. Not thrown away upon me though, as far as grateful tenderness can deserve it. . . . Oh Henrietta, how I congratulate you ! What a joy to have this baby ! What thankfulness ! . . .

Indeed, dear, I have thanked God for you—you must know that of me! I have thanked Him for you and for myself, and for your children and Surtees and all of us.

As to the name you mean to give the child—dear I will not judge for you. I did not do it for mine, but really this whole subject is so beyond my experience and imagination, that you may be much more right than I am—and there may be something pleasing in it. For my part, I don't much care to use beloved names over again, and to tell you the truth, I have a sort of regret for having called my child Robert! A name can't be too individual I think. For the rest I shall love your baby, be sure. Oh—I do trust I shall have great joy in the sight and knowledge of you all this year!

In the meantime I am not joyful except for your sake. We are very anxious about dear Mr. Kenyon who is, I fear, in a dangerous state. He wanders much at times, and his vision appears troubled, tho' at intervals he is quite himself—aware of his precarious state, with occasional in-breaks of hope of rallying. There seem to be some good symptoms, but I am in great alarm and sadness about this dear kind generous friend, of course. Robert has twice offered himself as a nurse. The first time, there was a kind negative, but this second time we have not yet heard. Mrs. Jameson wrote to press Robert to go—but you see it is a *very delicate position*. . . .

. . . Dear, dear Mr. Kenyon! Of course we think of very little else. Mr. Edward Kenyon is sent for from Vienna, but has not arrived yet—or had not, up to two days ago.

Also I have been in a panic about Arabel, who has grown to me the worst correspondent that can be. You say *I* can! But then, Henrietta, do remember that I am aware of your having news of me under my hand always—whereas if nobody writes to me, nobody writes. Surtees didn't give me London news, only Somerset news. A ton of load is taken from the top of my brain by a letter of Arabel's to Peni. She was only tired half to death with a bazaar. Oh, if people would but learn to write six words and send them by the post.

" I am only tired, not extinct!

Arabel" !

it would save one such horrible minutes of dread. I work myself up, you know. And Arabel works herself down—there's the difference between the two. Certainly she will end by coming to some serious harm by positive over-working. As if there were not enough to do at the Refuge, without a bazaar!

At this moment, in comes a letter from her, dear darling! Oh, I reproach myself *so* for ever scolding her. But I was lashed up with fright into rage. She's only too good for us mortals—too dear for one's ease certainly. One can't take it quietly when one thinks perhaps that they are near to tolling the bells for her. I am really *mad* sometimes, I get so frightened by silences.

There's a lesson for you, Henrietta! Write to me, as often as you can. Dear Mr. Kenyon seems to be scarcely better—very ill, I fear, I fear.

Altham's letter quite surprised me, it was so well written and spelt—a sweet little letter!

. . . Give my love to Surtees when you write to him, and thank him much for his last kind letter. Dearest Henrietta may God keep all your treasures for you, and *all together* for long! Robert's love with the tender thoughts of your

BA.

78

Pressure of Paris—House lent by Mr. Kenyon—The Martins; suspect her of shamming—Hume in Paris—Is a bone in R. B.'s throat—Spread of spiritualism in America—Growing popularity of Napoleon—News.

Paris, 3 Rue du Colysée,
June 12, 1856.

MY BELOVED HENRIETTA,

If I could sit in a veil and write, I would, for I am ashamed. . . . Dearest Henrietta you can't think how I am barked into a corner by all this quantity of business, and how hard it is to stand clear and not tired, so as to be able to write letters at ease. So one puts off and puts off. If I had written whenever I thought of you, *you* would have been overworked in reading.

S

This poem not done yet! and a new edition of the other poems in the press,—with corrections to be attended to. So unfortunate! everything coming at once.

You will have heard all my news from Arabel—and how we go to Devonshire Place by Mr. Kenyon's desire. It is very kind, and perfectly unexpected of course. There are two servants left in the house. The worst is, that I fear he is in a very uncertain state, and that there will be melancholy associations therefore, with every thing.

We remain here at least a week beyond the sixteenth, on account of my poem; but we can't wait for the transcription of the last two books, so that I must make time in London. The Hedleys are there, in Grafton street, for a month.

Really I don't know how I am to get over Paris. I have things to buy of course, in order to appear decently in England, —and unusually for me, at this time of year, my favorite shopping is too much for me quite, and I feel sympathetically with Penini.

" It's really enough to mate one dead, to sit a whole hour in shops looting at dresses."

Yesterday, I made an effort, got out at two shops, and came back a ghost. . . .

The Martins are here. She has been extremely unwell. They are always driving about, and we miss them constantly, calling and being called on. We were asked to dine at their hotel with them last sunday—but the weather was uncertain, and I by no means up to going out in the evening: but I don't think they seemed quite satisfied with us for refusing. (I am sure Mr. Martin suspects me of a systematic process of shamming, by the way.)

Think of my horror at Robert's having heard to-day that Hume the medium is in Paris. I thought he was in Rome. I looked so scared that Robert promised me he would be " meek as maid " for my sake, and that if he met the man in the street he would pass without pretending to see. Oh—perhaps you don't know that Robert had talked himself into quite a hatred of this Hume, which of course was very foolish indeed.

On the subject of spirits generally we are at peace, and

one can hear oneself speak. I had a letter three days ago from Mr. Story, for which we paid three francs and a half, so full it was on the subject. *He* has had mediums walking in the air over the heads of him and others—feet literally on heads—and is quite convinced. Robert and I read the letter together on the sofa, like the lion and the lamb—but Hume personally is still a bone in the lion's throat. Certainly a young man of very unreliable nature, as weak as a reed, and more vulgar—but a most wonderful medium in spite of all. Pray never mention his name though. As much of spirits, apart from him, as you please.

Mr. Story says, that the belief has penetrated into all parts of American society, and when you scratch through the most external fashionable crust you find it everywhere. Even the great new music Hall at Boston, (of the opening of which you may have read in the Athenaeum, together with the erection of Crauford's statue to Beethoven,) is filled *every sunday* with from five hundred to a thousand persons—mediums in a state of trance and otherwise ministering to them. This is extraordinary in a cold conventional place like Boston.

Louis Napoleon is rising everyday in popularity through his conduct during the inundations. A boatman carried him through the mud on his back, in some places—and he went in an open boat, he and his aide de camp, alone with the boatman and administered help with his own hand through the windows of the flooded towns. Tears ran down his cheeks, they say. Of course there's a quantity of enthusiasm about it. Robert says it's a man of genius using his opportunities—and there are people who exclaim on *his luck*, and that even evil turns to good for him.

. . . Dearest dear Henrietta, do write to me and tell me of yourself first, and then of your treasures—of the last pearl that came into the treasury in particular. . . . wouldn't it be well for you to let your house in Somersetshire for the summer and be transplanted to London at once? Oh, how happy it would be. Love me, dearest Henrietta.

Your ever and ever attached

BA.

79

Cold and busy in London—Mr. Kenyon's house—Subjects that Henrietta objects to for "Aurora Leigh."

39 Devonshire Place, Portland Place, London,
July 9, 1856.

My ever dearest Henrietta,

With hands almost incapacitated from cold in this England and July, I write to excuse my heart—which keeps warm enough and thinks of you in all tender love, however abominable has been the silence. Every day I have meant to write. But you know what London is, how bells ring and knockers knock,—and you don't know how desperately in haste I am with poems not done and proofs not corrected. Almost frantic I grow sometimes, what with one thing and another.

Meanwhile I have two letters of yours. Dearest Henrietta, how good of you! how happy it is to know that you think of me, dear, dear!

Kiss your darlings for me. Oh, to see them, to see them! Peni is very grateful for Altham's letter.

We are most comfortable here, though of course rather afraid of moving our elbows for fear of breaking something. Mr. Kenyon has two servants here, whose business it is to keep the house clean. Our own servants cook and attend to us. Dear Mr. Kenyon is better, I am happy to say.

No religion, no politics, no spirits!! add "no bodies"—and you shut out my poor poem from most subjects in heaven and earth. Well—you may like some things in it—and that's all I can hope. There is one reference to the spirits, but nobody will be offended by it as Robert isn't.

. . . We dined at the Procters on sunday, and breakfast at Monckton Milnes's on friday—but other invitations have been disregarded.

Trippy is wonderfully well—looking much better—walks in the park! think of that!

George is brilliant, the rest looking very well.

Do write to me, dearest Henrietta. One word tumbles over another. Robert's love to you and Surtees.

Your ever attached Ba.

80

Writes from Wimpole Street—Insists on a meeting—Pressure of work and friends—A present forgotten.

50 Wimpole Street,
July, 1856.

My dearest Henrietta,

In Wimpole street, sitting at Arabel's table while she goes down to see Trippy in the dining room, I take her pen, and ask you to keep me company.

Well,—I had your letter, and I have been turning it over and over ever since, just as I have turned over and over the thought of you, ever since I came. Dear, we must see one another's faces—that is quite, quite sure—at whatever cost, to me at least. But I do want you to come here, that Arabel you and I may be together. Dear, dear, you must try. I press it that you may come to be our guests, Robert's and mine —you, baby, and Altham. Oh, Altham can't be done without, observe—it is not possible. Now let this petition lie at dear Surtees's foot. I entreat his affectionate attention towards it. Consider it both of you, for love's sake! I don't press the execution *instantly*, seeing that I am in an agony of business just now, about the poem which is only *nearly* ready for the press—writing for hours every day; and though I am nearly at the end of transcription, there will be much besides to see to. But soon—there will be less to do. Also London engagements won't be dragging one on all sides so hard. See you I *must* and *will*, Henrietta.

Oh—think of my forgetting to send you a very little trifle I brought from Paris, by aunt Jane. I missed Ibbet, and I forgot by aunt Jane. Come and get it. . . .

Arabel shrieks out I shall be too late.

Your ever affec^te.

Ba.

81

Mr. Barrett ill—Arabel and a refractory cook at the Refuge—Alleged worldliness—Cannot go to Somerset; too busy with printing—American payments—Best for H. to come to London with children—London weather and dinners both stuffy—The Cowpers—Mrs. Prinsep—Hallé and Mrs. Sartoris, music.

Mrs. Prinsep was the wife of Henry Thoby Prinsep, Indian civil servant and administrator, and at this time a director of the East India Company. For about seven years he had been settled at Little Holland House, where Melbury Road now stands, making a centre of artistic society, with Watts and the young Burne Jones among his especial friends. One of his sons was Val Prinsep, R.A. Mrs. Sartoris was Adelaide Kemble. William Cowper was the brother of Earl Cowper (Letter 60), statesman, later Cowper-Temple and Lord Mount-Temple.

39, Devonshire Place, London,
Aug. 3, 1856.

My ever dearest Henrietta,

I won't delay half an hour in answering your letter, because I see you are uneasy, and I know how terrible such an anxiety is. It is quite true that our beloved Papa is not well just now, but there is nothing vitally wrong nor reason for apprehension. He was extremely unwell the evening of aunt Jane's visit, but not dangerous nor lasting. The next morning he was better than usual.

For Arabel, she is not strong—and when she over-works herself (which she does in spite of arguments and prayers) it tells. The day aunt Jane came and found her in this house, according to engagement, she had been from eleven till four doing the part of a policeman over a refractory cook at the Refuge, who had to be turned out at the point of the javelin. The matron being afraid of her, Arabel remained on guard all those hours. Of course after her usual thin breakfast. She came back quite exhausted naturally, praying for bread and butter—the swallowing of which (and a little more I forced on her) did not prevent her feeling quite faint, till I had to administer smelling bottles and settle her on the sofa, so that on aunt Jane's arrival she was by no means in her ordinary

condition. But this was accidental, as you may judge. I think her spirits, however, are much better since our arrival. She says we make her wicked and worldly, because twice we have beguiled her from the Thursday evening services. Generally speaking she does not by any means look ill. You would not think so if you saw her. And rest, with fresh air, and a new atmosphere of mental associations, which she wants more than anything else, would make another person of her I am sure. Oh, if we could but take her to Italy this winter !—I aspire—but sadly, because so helplessly.

My dearest Henrietta, I do thank you and dear Surtees—*we* thank you—for your kindness in inviting us to Somerset. The fact is that at present we can't stir on account of this pressing business about the poem. The proofs must be attended to on the spot, or we shall not have time for the publication. Eleven thousand lines to print ! Imagine that. The publisher in America gives us a hundred pounds for the right of printing simultaneously with the English publisher ; but in order to do this, we must hasten, and be rigorous as to time. Still, there's a truth that remains beyond all facts of the kind—namely, that *I must see you before going to Italy*—MUST.

There is time to consider. Meanwhile remember this—We can't be together (you, Arabel and I) except by your coming to London. Dearest Henrietta, it isn't possible for Arabel to go to you—you must remember that—and it would be very hard on her to lose me and you together. Also, you are not at all reasonable in your objection to *paying us a visit*, which is what we ask—nothing can be more absurd ! I beseech you and dear Surtees to turn it over in your altered souls and concede the point.

As to Mary, I'm as anxious as possible to see the darling little face—only I thought by making a grasp at Mary, Altham might slip through my fingers. Ah, thank you dearest dear Henrietta, about the Daguerreotype. I am very glad you have such a remembrance of the infancy of your children. Such things are very dear.

. . . Oh—yes ! it is hot—this heavy, damp, stifling English heat ! And think of me dining out in such weather ! Fancy

me, scarcely living through the heavy, damp, stifling English dinners! We dined with the William Cowpers though, rather pleasantly, on saturday. They called on us, on our meeting them somewhere, and Robert took an extraordinary fancy to her, THOUGH she believes in the spirits! Lady Palmerston's son and daughter in law—both of them very sympathetical—she, like a swan for grace and refinement, and with such a sweet human smile.

Yesterday we were invited to Mrs. Prinsep's " afternoon hours " (a new fashionable London entertainment) on the lawn of little Holland House—but it being sunday, I was done up sufficiently with Arabel in the morning, and couldn't stir from the sofa afterwards. Mrs. Prinsep is the present Lady Somers's sister, but not like Lady Somers—whom I never saw, by the way, but people talk of her as beautiful.

One of the best evenings of all, was at the Hallés' (the great musical artist's) last thursday in Bryanston square. He played Beethoven divinely—and there were other artists there—for instance, Mrs. Sartoris who sang. The music was first rate altogether.

Kisses to the small faces round—and love to dear Surtees. Dear Surtees, you think of me!

Your ever attached

BA.

82

Snowballing with hard thoughts—Plans for Somerset, possibly with Arabel, now at Ventnor—Mr. Kenyon very ill—Pen and the seaside—Alter no arrangements.

Mr. Kenyon, whose guests the Brownings were at his London house, was lying ill at Cowes. As the only chance of seeing him, the Brownings went on to Cowes from Ventnor, where they had joined Arabel again. To be near her, as they were all through July, was one of their chief inducements in coming to England, and they had to make fresh arrangements when Mr. Barrett suddenly packed her off to the sea for a much needed change of air. Nor could she leave Ventnor to join her sisters in Somerset without provoking a domestic storm.

3, Parade, West Cowes, Isle of Wight,
Sept. 8, 1856.

You must be pelting me with hard thoughts! I dreamed last night I was walking in the snow—so they may come in snow-balls! But Peni, in my dream, said "It is exquisite"—so, I hope, they won't kill me in your love quite, my dearest dear Henrietta, and that you will forgive me when I tell you why I have been silent for a month after your dear tender letter.

The fact is, I *couldn't* say "We are coming," and I *wouldn't* say anything else. Robert cried, "wait and see what we can do"—so I waited to write, besides. At last, it is settled—we see the light—we leave dear Mr. Kenyon on monday, and go to you direct—that is, if you are still of the same mind, and really desire to have us, and don't agree with me that you had better plant us in some out-house, farm-house, something of that kind. You were offended with me for mentioning it—but Surtees *may* be more reasonable—and remember, Henrietta, there are four of us! Robert, Peni, Wilson, and me! We will try to be good and give you as little trouble as possible.

And what joy it will be to see you, and to see the children, and to see Surtees, and to see your house, and to see and know all about you! We shall come through Yeovil from Southampton, on monday, mind!

Arabel and I talking of this, she said and swore she would go, too, if she *could*, without fear of an arrival from London. I have written to tell her when we go—and perhaps, perhaps—But no, I don't dare to think of it. Robert says it's very wrong of me even to wish for it. But I'm wrong obstinately. I'm wicked—I do wish it—Only I don't hope much. I left her in bad spirits, distressed and angry at being sent to Ventnor, and determined to dislike it accordingly. She says she has been out to sketch with Occy—poor darling!

We have had a melancholy visit here, and shall feel more melancholy in going away. Dear Mr. Kenyon is very ill. Still, I do not think he will die yet—and if he were younger, I should be still more hopeful. His kindness to us is beyond description. He has asked a good deal about you, and your children. Oh, so kind!

Little Pen is all the rosier for his month of the sea : but I am prepared for his delicacy being *abashing*, by the side of Altham and Mary ! He has had a child of Sir Charles Fellowes's to play with here,—otherwise poor Mr. Kenyon's quiet house would have been very dull for him after the joys of Ventnor, where he grew insolent with happiness, in the midst of the kindness of " mine untles."

Dearest dear Henrietta, remember—if you have any engagements, don't make us miserable by disturbing them. We, on our parts, will be necessarily engaged a good deal with proof-sheets—as we have been all day to-day, till my back and head ache. The book is scarcely more than half done—and time passes, and the winter comes.

One word to say, if we may come on monday. Robert's love, and mine to Surtees and the darlings.

Your Ba.

83

Return to London from Somerset—Hopes of soon meeting again—Comparative emptiness of London—Algiers—Verses for her cousin.

The hope of another meeting was never realised. After this visit to Somerset Henrietta and Elizabeth never saw one another again.

There is nothing to identify these verses for her young cousin, Ibbet Hedley. The Hedleys were living at Sidbrook, where, it seems, the Cooks afterwards thought to settle.

39 Devonshire Place, London,
Oct. 1, 1856.

My beloved Henrietta,

After you had missed Surtees for above two hours you had him back again,—but what are we to do who have missed you all yesterday, and miss you to-day, and must miss you to-morrow ? Dear, it was so sad to come away, that, almost, one lost the sense of the blessing of having gone—Not for long, however.

It is delightful and precious to me to be able to think of you in that nest of love, with the three babies round you. And

oh, how kind you and Surtees were to us, and how pleasant is the remembrance of such kindness—how pleasant, how precious. We take with us not only a true appreciation, but a real sisterly and brotherly love for your Surtees—tell him so —tell him that I rejoice too to know you belong to him! and *that's* the fullest of compliments as it is the tenderest of truths.

What did you say when you knew that we had been for two hours so near you? But I could not go through all the pain of the good bye over again. We managed the journey very well—had sandwiches here (besides yours) and coffee there—we took care of one another, I assure you—and Penini laid his head on Robert's knee and went to sleep. Somebody said—

"I think papa spoils you."

On which he opened his eyes and gravely explained—

"No, it isn't papa: it's mama."

At half past ten o'clock we arrived in London,—and were in Devonshire Place before eleven. *So* tired that I scorned the sight of the fire and spread table cloth, and broke through a panegyric of Ferdinando's upon a certain ham ("eccelentissimo,") and rushed up to bed at once. However a cup of tea came, and with that I made out a tolerably sleepful night.

Peni keeps talking of the children—especially of Mary. He has decidedly a tendresse for Mary, and I can't wonder. Mary'll be a Helen to fire another Troy, one of these days. Give a kiss to that darling, and to the other—Altham—and to the third, the baby. . . .

No letter from Ventnor at all. One from Mr. Kenyon. He remains better.

London is empty, and we have had only five relays of visitors to-day. I sent Penini with Ferdinando to Trippy's early in the morning, and she was gracious to the chickens and cream.

We hear of quantities of people going to Algiers, but I don't much fancy we shall go, in spite of urgings on their part.

I have not been out to-day. London was wrapt this morning in fog very uninvitingly; and besides I was tired still from yesterday.

I enclose my verses (for Ibbet) which I meant to leave, and find in my desk. Robert will send his when he has breathing time.

Surtees's speech reads capitally—I will give it to Alfred. Kisses from Pen to his darling friends—the dear Althams! I may say—remember my last words for Sidbrook.

May God bless and love you, dearest dear Henrietta, and dearest Surtees and all of you, prays

Your loving

Ba—And Robert too.

84

Sad departure from England—Work nearly finished—Mr. Ruxton's poems under spiritual guidance.

39 Devonshire Place,
Oct. 11, 1856.

My dearest Henrietta,

Peni's letters have waited for me—and I have been ground down for work. There's a better account of papa by yesterday's post from Arabel. Ventnor is damp and foggy, she says, and does not agree with him well. I have been very anxious—and shall be sadder than usual in leaving England this year. May God help us all.

To stay is no good to anybody however—and the wretched weather here, fog and east wind, have affected me so that I can't send a flourishing account of myself in reply to your enquiries. Robert wants to get me off as whole as possible,—so that we are trying not to overstay this day week—saturday. Hard work will it be if we make out the possibility of it. The book is still within eighty pages of its completion—but we have sent the pages up to these, to America, in their completed state.

Mary Ruxton has been here—making many enquiries of you and your darlings. She says her husband, who never wrote verses in his life, filled a quire of paper with poetry the other day, in the course of three quarters of an hour, under "*spiritual guidance*." I am to see some of it. She tells me that the thing is spreading widely,—and especially within the last fortnight—and that it is supposed the mediumship in

England will be of a higher character than in America by much. Mary looks very well and pretty.

. . . Oh, in such haste !

Your ever loving

BA.

85

Weary stress—Yet must miss Arabel's return—Miss Mitford's letters —Mr. Barrett better.

The death of her old friend Miss Mitford was a severe blow to E. B. B.

39 Devonshire Place,
Oct. 17, 1856.

MY BELOVED HENRIETTA,

I should have written yesterday—and it vexes me to think that I didn't. The work presses almost too much when one is not well,—and coughs half the night by way of preparation for a laborious day—and so, omissions *will* happen. Now I can tell you that last night I slept better ; and that the book is almost done ; and that we go—perhaps on monday,—if not, on tuesday. I hope on monday. I hate going away just a few days before Arabel comes—it seems cruel both to her and me. But a " good bye " isn't worth straining for. And then really if I stay here much longer, I shall be laid up and worse than useless to everybody, saying nothing of myself. By the time I get to Lyons, all will go well again, I don't doubt.

What has been terrible to me, and is, is the necessity of examining my dear friend Miss Mitford's letters, in order to let Mr. Harness have what is not unfit for publication. I put it off till the last, through a natural horror—(you know how such things affect me—) and now I am driven to the wall, and made doubly sad on these last days.

Papa is better. I hear that George arrived last night—but I have not seen him yet.

Peni was charmed with the letters and will answer them from Florence. May God bless you, dearest—and all of you. True love from Robert and me to dear Surtees.

Your attached

BA.

86

Last work to be done—Autographed copies of the book—Gift for Surtees—Children's illness ; write to Florence—Plans for journey —Health—Must miss Arabel—"Aurora Leigh" may shock her —Sad departure—Hope of return.

This visit to England, as it turned out, was her last.

39 Devonshire Place,
Oct. 22, 1856.

MY VERY DEAREST HENRIETTA,

One word of goodbye. We go to-morrow—and couldn't before, being so put upon, and pressed upon, and trampled on by affairs of all kinds. After this, I have only *fifty autographs* to write ; and then my work is all but done, in the way of writing.

We think we observed that Surtees wears studs sometimes—and so we are encouraged to ask his acceptance of these bits of Florentine malachite, to wear now and then, with a thought for us two, his brother and sister, Robert and Ba.

Dearest Henrietta, I am so very sorry that the darling little Mary should be unwell. Mind you let me hear how she is, and write to Florence,—which we shall not reach, however, in much less than a fortnight, in as much as, though we spend a bare day in Paris, if we take the Cornice road from Marseilles, we shall spend a week between that latter place and Genoa. A week, though, of warm climate—warmer than Tuscany—and I shall be infinitely better and stronger, I dare say, before I arrive. As it is, I am better than I was three days ago ; and don't cough at night to the same house-rending extent.

The worst is that Arabel comes on thursday, and we go on wednesday. If we stayed another day we should have to set off at three in the morning—and that would not answer at all. So we go—and I console myself by thinking of the badness of the goodbyes.

"Aurora Leigh" shall be sent to you. I dare say it will shock you ; but you will like a few things, perhaps—*rather !*

. . . I go away rather easier—but it will be sadder than usual after all. We return next summer, if it shall

please God. Can you read this blotch? If you saw the confusion!

May God bless you my beloved Henrietta, and my dear Surtees! I join you both in affection and blessing. Goodbye dearest Henrietta, dearest Surtees, say Robert and

BA.

87

Too few letters from London—Children—Recovered from cough—Fortunate in late tenants—Out of the world—General dislike of Hume, but belief in manifestations—Mrs. Kinney—Hume's illness and prophesied death—Mr. Ruxton's poem [Letter 84] has not turned up—Flowers and frost—Hard criticism of "Aurora Leigh" expected.

The plan of fully furnishing and letting their flat in Florence had turned out most successful.

Florence,
Nov. 18, 1856.

MY DEAREST HENRIETTA,

I am waiting day after day for a letter from London. George wrote to me very kindly. From Arabel I have not had a word since her return, and I am forced to hang by the comfort that she *did* write to *you*. Well! I suppose I must go on so—and that while I am in Italy, I shall have the fewest words possible from London.

Dearest Henrietta, it is a real, lasting pleasure to me to have seen and known your darlings as we did in Somersetshire. I am not likely to forget a feature of them, be certain. So very glad I am that little Mary is better. Keep her safe this winter, and don't let the treasure go out in a cold wind or a too moist air.

Our best love and best thanks to dear Surtees for his affectionate letter. How too good you both are to us.

As you ask about my cough I will tell you at once not to think of it again. It dropped off somewhere on the road and has not returned, though we have had very cold weather, and the tops of our mountains are now white with snow.

We found our house in excellent order. We are more fortunate in tenants that you are; and I can't imagine how it

is that our carpets never wear out. Since our return we have been furnishing our large extra-drawing room. Afterwards (when we let the house) there is a large bedroom in addition, to enable us to raise the rent. We have carpeted the floor, and bought chairs, sofa, &c. &c. Also we have bought a new bed for Penini ; and a large glass, and a new wardrobe for me. It's very pleasant, even after Mr. Kenyon's house, to find ourselves here—though the place is duller and quieter than Paris and London, and we seem to ourselves to have dropped suddenly down a wall out of the world.

I have scarcely been in the open air (not after the first week) so afraid I am of the bitter tramontana wind—but people have come here of course, and I have heard quantities upon the Hume question, and everything confirmatory. It is curious how persons who agree in nothing else except in disliking Hume (for the foolish young man has succeeded in making himself universally disagreeable) all agree in considering the phenomena above nature.

Count Cottrell turned his back on Hume at Lady Normanby's as a " worthless fellow " : but told me at the same time—he would *swear* to having seen an arm come out of the ground veiled in white, but displaying a beautiful female hand —that the hand professed to be the hand of Mrs. Powers's mother—that the hand drew a chair by the back towards the table and then took a sheet of paper and a pencil from the table,—and *wrote* in the sight of them all, what they all read, the name written four or five times over in the very handwriting of the deceased person.

Sophia Cottrell had her dead baby on her knees for a quarter of an hour—and said—

" Darling, won't you give your hand to papa ? " On which, her husband swears that he felt and held a baby's hand in his, and drew his fingers down every separated finger. If you knew Count Cottrell, what a matter of fact man he is !

Robert went to see an unbelieving friend of his who used to talk with him of the absurdity of people holding by such delusions. To his surprise he found the whole house turned round. They had used various precautions—had tied Hume's

legs and arms. The spirit-hands came and undid the knots before their eyes. They introduced (unknown to Hume) under the table, a man whom they could trust; and the phenomena took place the same. On one occasion, the whole room shook as in an earthquake—and to such a degree, that everybody in it was sick. Under these circumstances, scepticism was impossible. Everybody would be delighted to disbelieve in Hume—but they can't. They hate him, and believe the facts.

Mrs. Kinney the American ex-minister's wife,* thanked Robert vehemently for his violence to Hume—and then mentioned a little fact of her own. Once when the table was raised, lifted sideways, and a pencil rolled off to the edge, she put out her hand to prevent its falling—when lo, there it remained—and she could not *with all her force*, separate it from the table.

The last news of Hume is, that he is dying or dead in Paris of congestion of the lungs! The spirits said two years ago (as Arabel will remember) that two years would be the term of his life. Not that they are always right in such prophecies.

No—Mr. Ruxton's poem, under spiritual influence, did not reach me. Probably he did not choose to confront Robert with it, and, if so, he was wise.

You can't think how learned Peni is already in all the gossip of Florence (he gets among the Italians and listens with erect ears) and how he translates to us most horrible stories. He would make Mary open her hazel eyes with fear, if she could hear him.

Peni has taken to lecture me so. I propose calling him "grandpapa." He said at dinner the other day—

"Papa is about thirty, I think—but mama *tant* be more than twenty, and so she *tant* know as much as papa. When we are younger" (condescending to include himself in the proposition) "*we* don't know everysing."

The child gives himself wonderful airs, certainly. He is fond of talking of the Althams—Altham and Mary.

We have beautiful flowers on the table, though Peni has just brought me in a piece of ice. I am afraid of this weather.

* See Letter 73.

Still, in change for any sun, I would have a good letter from Arabel. Oh, it is so far away to have to wait long. God bless you all.

Don't be too ashamed of me when you hear me called hard names for my new poem. Certainly you *will* dearest Henrietta.

Your ever attached

BA.

88

Mr. Kenyon's death and legacy—Unhappy omissions—Appreciated dedication of "Aurora Leigh"—Publication and reviews—Supposed to be written by the spirits—Dante's shade—Mr. Kirkup's sketches of the good and evil spirits—Count Ginnasi—Peni, table turning and the Italian Santa Claus—Repose of Italy—Arabel less Spartan.

By making the two poets independent, Mr. Kenyon rendered a great service to English literature.

Count Ginnasi professed to have great mesmeric and clairvoyant faculties, and a curious piece of clairvoyance in respect to some studs belonging to Browning is recorded in the *Life of Robert Browning*, p. 213. The spiritualists not only credited the spirits with writing "Aurora Leigh," but when vexed by E. B. B.'s politics, declared she was "biologised by infernal spirits" (Letters ii, 403).

Florence,
Jany. 10, 1857.

MY BELOVED HENRIETTA,

I reproach myself much for this silence at Christmas time, when I should have been at your side in a letter, as in the spirit I was indeed, loving and blessing you and yours.

We have had a black season of it—but of this I won't speak now. Of the pecuniary gain involved in all the sadness, you have heard. We are not to touch it for a year, the executors have that time to make their various payments in, and really they are strange executors,—never having written to us from first to last,—so that if it had not been for others, we should have heard nothing even to this day.

Dearest Henrietta, I had hoped that you yourself would have been remembered. From the silence, (I mean from

people not naming it to me) it appears you have not been, however—which disappoints and grieves me more than I can say. Arabel represents papa as much vexed. If the principle of relationship had been recognised *at all*, (*which it was not*) he had his *undoubted* claim.

Such an affectionate letter he wrote to me in those last days, expressing his satisfaction in the dedication of "Aurora Leigh." Well, I will not write of these things.

Dearest Henrietta, thank you and dear Surtees for your sympathy and kindness about the book. The second edition should have been out by this time; but Chapman's name begins with a C like a crab's, and there's a likeness otherwise.

In America it is published. We can barely hear of it, and of the reception which is said to be very favourable. I can scarcely understand how more offence has not been given and taken in certain quarters. Only, there's a review in Blackwood, and Blackwood will grind me to powder, I don't doubt, as far as Blackwood can.

Oh yes—we heard of the Press. And the Guardian—tell me, Henrietta, if your Guardian did not bark like a mastiff and tear me. Robert says I am longing to be abused a little—mind, *I* don't say so.

Mr. Jarves came to enquire very seriously the other day, whether there was any truth in the story going about Florence that "Aurora" was written by the "spirits," and that I disavowed any share in it except the mere mechanical holding of the pen!!! Think of that.

Then, Mrs. Jameson writes to tell me of a history as *véridique*, given in the Court Journal—namely, that "the spiritual hands of Dante rose from the ground and crowned me with an orange-wreath, (under Hume's influence) and that my husband preserved the wreath as a memorial of this honour"—Says Mrs. Jameson, "if it isn't true, give me authority to contradict it, as it is much talked of." What a pity, that it shouldn't be true.

Speaking of the spirits, Mr. Kirkup was here this morning with various sketches of the evil and good, as spiritually discerned by friends of his—and there was an angel from a higher

sphere, in a long floating garment of blue gleaming into rose-colour. The evil spirits are seen as through a dark veil.

Count Ginnasi (count Gamba's cousin) (whom Penini calls " a very nice medium, *I* think ") came again the other evening, but succeeded considerably less in his experiments. Also, I don't feel sure myself that he did not *push the table*,—though he does not seem to us given to cheat generally. Still, on this occasion—not that the table did more than move to the end of the room—none of the experiments were satisfactory.

The Count is goodnatured and jocose, and Peni likes him much. Little Peni is very amusing. He pretends to be an " esprit fort " like Robert, and all the time is evidently incapable of a doubt, poor little faithful soul. The Count proposed that the spirits should lift the table into the air—" No, no," said Peni earnestly, " questo io non voglio, for," continued he, " if the table's lifted in the air, it may fall down on our heads and hurt us very much."

On this second visit of the Count, Penini ran up to him and directly informed him of his (Peni's) late spiritual experience in the gifts of the Befana. The Befana you must know, is the witch of Florence, who on the twelfth night comes to the bedside of good children and fills an empty stocking hung up for the occasion. Peni had a stocking full and running over of gifts—oranges, chocolate-bonbons—an accordion, a doll, a powder-flask. The child's ecstasy in the morning was intense. He had given particular instructions to Wilson overnight, not to make too large a fire, lest the Befana should have a difficulty in coming down the chimney.

" Oh—such a kind Befana ! Really the Befana was kinder than ever." Really, he felt even more happy than on Christmas Day. . . .

I mean to pile flower-pots, orange-trees &c. on our terrace, when the winter begins to warm into spring. Just now it is cold. I don't suffer notwithstanding. Certainly there's something in the Italian air which suits me wonderfully. And then, the repose, the quiet, after Paris and London. That dearest Arabel did me good by the note she sent me. She sent me good news of papa, and didn't leave out her darling

self, as she usually does. Just imagine her yielding so much as to have a fire in her room at nights, and mentioning it as if she had made a concession! She to whom a fire at night is a matter of absolute necessity! It's really monstrous. Minny ought to insist on that fire's being lighted in the morning also. I always have a fire in the winter, both night and morning even here in Italy. . . .

Dearest dear Henrietta, write to me soon, and tell me of little Mary, and how you all are, dear things. . . . May God bless you, dearest—you and your dear Surtees, and the precious three. Robert's best love, and Peni's.

Your ever attached

BA.

89

A birthday letter—The treasures of life—Mr. Kenyon's will: surprises and disappointments—Carnival festivities for Pen—Goes herself to a masked ball—Crinoline fashions—"Aurora Leigh," criticisms—Hume's power returns.

The carnival festivities are also described, but without the sequel, in a letter dated a few days earlier, to Sarianna Browning, Robert's sister. (*Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, ii, 256.)

Florence,
March 4, 1857.

MY BELOVED HENRIETTA,

I must think of you to-day as on every day, yet most to-day. I have been praying for you and yours,—and I do wish I could hear of yours that they had one of those gifts so prayed for—the health of body—for it has been hard to think, dearest, that you should have been so anxious all the winter. We, who hold these treasures, how we tremble head and foot when the fairy-gifts seem for a moment to fade. May yours not fade! May the brightness come back and stay. May God bless you all in body and soul, in the world and the world approaching—and may we all hold hands with tender joy long here, and for ever there.

. . . Penini will soon be eight years old. If *ever* he does

so much as cough, Robert is in anguish—but then there's reason to be afraid for him on account of his hereditary disadvantages, dear child. Your children need not alarm you, with your healthy habit of body in them. . . .

We have not heard one word about our legacy, and of course we shall have to wait till the end of the year for any sort of satisfaction about it. How extraordinary, that eighty thousand pounds (£80,000) should be left to the residuary legatees, besides their specific legacies! Surely it must be by a great over-sight on the part of the testator. I think so. I am much disappointed about you. Robert spoke warmly of dear Surtees—he took an opportunity of doing that: but, you see, everything was determined in a hurry and agitation, and between wanderings of mind, at last. For ourselves, if we had expected anything considerable, (but, as you know, we did *not*) there would have been some disappointment on our own part. As it is, we are very thankful and contented. I only wish the same had been done by you. . . .

Florence has been mad in the carnival lately and Penini persecuted me (with tears and kisses) into buying him a blue domino and blue satin mask in which he ran about the streets from morning to night, followed by Wilson out of breath who lost him every ten minutes in the crowd.

"Now, Lily, don't call me Penini! I *pray* you, don't." So glad she is, it's over. When I found the domino was imminent, I proposed that it should be a black common domino—but Peni threw himself down face foremost on the sofa in despair, "he hated black—he wanted a blue domino with *pink* trimming!" So, as it was a mere matter of private taste and pleasure, I yielded,—only compounding for a *blue* trimming; and the rapture of that child was beyond words. I fancied it was a day's caprice—but the joy lasted. He had offered to give up his birth-day-presents for it; and in fact no other present could have given such pleasure I think. There he was, talking Italian, here and there, to strangers, in the street, as bold as brass under his blue satin mask,—mixing in the crowd, pushing along—poor Lily in the distance! Well she may be glad, it's over.

But I talk of Peni's dissipations and say nothing of mine—*mine* Henrietta. What will my Arabel say to me?—excommunicate me from my dear place next her at Mr. Stratton's. I'm afraid to think. So I shall tell you, Henrietta, aside, in a low whisper—only I won't swear you to keep the secret, because I'm too frank for that. Well then. I, *I*, such as you know me, I who had not stirred from the fire for three months, put on a domino, and a mask, and went to the masked ball at the opera and *came back* at two in the morning. The facts are thus. In the course of the carnival Robert had accepted two or three invitations from owners of opera-boxes—and at the close of the season when there were to be several of these masked balls (only customary at carnival time) he had resolved to return these civilities by taking a box one night and inviting those hospitable friends, and Italian gentlemen thereto appertaining.

This was all very well—but neither he nor I thought of the possibility of my going, though I had said once or twice that I should like it if it had been safe for me—only I had no thought of committing suicide through any such noble object. But when the day came, the wind had changed, it was very mild towards night; and Robert insisted that I could go without risk. He had had a beautiful black silk domino made for himself, (which by the way is now being made into a beautiful black silk dress for me): but there was no time to make me a domino of my own, so I went out and hired one.

We went at about half past ten,—found rather a pretty little room than a box,—and after a time, Robert and I went down together into the masked crowd below, and penetrated into every corner of the theatre. There was a crowd, but an Italian crowd,—so orderly and refined—not a coarse word or rough gesture anywhere. Such things would be so impossible in England. All the grandees in their boxes,—coming down every moment among the people,—even the Grand Duke, poor creature, wretched man, though he couldn't bear it long, to mix with them as if he were innocent! The brilliancy and variety of the sight, were well worth coming for; and then I like to see characteristic things.

At one o'clock Ferdinando produced a sort of supper in our box—gallantina, sandwiches, rolls, cakes, ices, and champagne ; and so it passed. I meant to have stayed to the end, but the weight of the air from so many breaths, together with the number of lights I suppose, made me feel disabled about the chest, (not cough—only oppression) and I took a carriage and returned at two o'clock ingloriously, leaving the rest of the party to follow, as Robert did at four in the morning.

It was surprising to me that I held up so long. The first time out, after three months. It shows how little I have lost strength this winter. I caught no cold : but was very tired of course and couldn't help falling asleep over every book I took up next day. I moralized and thought that if one went to a masked ball every night, one would lead a useless life—" proprio inutile "—as the Italians would say.

So far from that, however, everybody now is fasting and sighing,—and enlarging their petticoats, Henrietta : and by the way, to what circumference we shall come at last, it is hard to prophesy. The least advanced of my female friends, here, are in whalebone, and the others armed " in complete steel." I myself went so far the other day as to buy two whalebone hoops, but really I have not courage to let Wilson sew them in ; and I stand lingeringly by that species of crinoline-petticoat called " the tower of Malakoff," which I bought as I passed through.

What nonsense one talks ! when one has talked it, it's impossible to expect that one should be thought of except in the gayest spirits,—and yet really, Henrietta, I have had many sad and heavy thoughts this winter, many.

" Aurora Leigh," however, has done well. " Celestial purity " attributed to it here, and " shameful immorality " there. All sorts of contrary outcries : but the book so much read, that one hears of London booksellers who, in letting it out, limit the time to two days. I never had the same acceptance from the public with any other book. So glad I was that you liked it, you and Surtees. I thought you would like some things—while of course some could scarcely please you.

Hume's power has returned to him, they say, stronger than

ever at Paris; and he has thrice had interviews with Louis Napoleon. The news comes from Mrs. Macdonald here, whose daughter Mad^me^ Aguado (a Lady of the Empress's) was present at the *séances;* so I conclude upon its truth.

Best love to all, great and small, dear Surtees and the treasures. Soon I shall hope for another letter from Arabel; as after a pause my normal state of anxiety is resumed. Write to me, you, dearest dear Henrietta, and may God's mercies and blessings be thick around you. Robert's love and Peni's.

Your own attached

BA.

90

Death of Mr. Barrett—Arabel and living alone in London—Aunt Jane —Alfred—Memories—Spirit hopes—Postscript from R. B.

Crowe was a former lady's maid of the Barretts, now married.

Florence,
May 13, 1857.

MY BELOVED HENRIETTA,

it is true that first words must be said—but it seems difficult to me to write just now—the more that I feel as if I could write nothing to give a human soul any comfort or pleasure.

You did, dearest, when you wrote to me. How good you were to write so in kindness, and so considerately. Dearest, you see things as they are. We did what we could—it is true. And now God does what *He* can—and He manages men and spirits better than we who are nothing before Him—and before ourselves too, in moments like the late ones.

I am quite well. Do not think of me except thinking that I love you—dear. Yes, I attend to Penini. Occupation is the only thing to keep one on one's feet a little—that I know well. Only it is hard sometimes to force oneself into occupation,—there's—the hardness. And you—you have the children, and dear Surtees; and you trust God bravely and see things as they are. I thank God for you dearest.

Every day I expect a letter from our precious Arabel. For

her plans, I would not for the world cross her, or that she should be crossed—but I *do* much wish that she would leave all decisions for the future and come out here for the summer with us among the mountains, and get time to make up her mind quietly. They won't break up everything at once in Wimpole street—they can't, I should think, though I know nothing: but even if they did, dear Minny might stay for a few weeks or even months with *Crow* quite happily and comfortably, till things were further arranged.

I don't myself think that Storm and George will ever agree to Arabel's living by herself in London. I don't think so: but I wouldn't cross her—and she, for her precious part, must be reasonable, will be reasonable, dear darling that she is, and not give us all up for the "Refuge." Still let her choose her life and be well—only be well—and we will none of us tease her and vex her. Only for the first, it does seem to me that she would be better here—and with you a little, you say, first, for I do not forget your rights, dearest. She asks if *we* go to England—feeling (I am sure she does) that it is impossible for us this year. Oh no, no. I could not go to England indeed.

. . . I had a letter full of kindness from dearest aunt Jane, which Robert answered, and I will some day. I never shall forget one thing she did for me—and for you.

. . . I take up books—but my heart goes walking up and down constantly through that house of Wimpole street, till it is tired, tired. I dare say it is much the same with yours—only you have more children; and babies pull at their mother's thoughts every moment, which is good for you and happy.

Best love to dear Surtees and to the darlings. Peni has begun two or three letters to the Althams. May God bless you and keep you all. In that world, spirits learn and grow faster. It has been a great help to me that of late years I have apprehended more of the ways of life in that world.

May God bless you. He who holds the keys of Hades—bless you here and there. Be happy, dearest, and write much of yourself to your

ever attached

Ba.

(Enclosed in the above.)
(From Robert Browning to Henrietta.)

DEAREST HENRIETTA,

Ba has made an effort and written ; she is no more shaken than was inevitable, and far less than I should have expected. How kind and good you were to write, disregarding your own grief, for the sake of hers. It has been very strange and sudden and mournful : but I think there are some alleviating circumstances about it. Give my affectionate love to Surtees, and kiss all your dear little THREE for me. God bless you all, ever

R. B.

91

A heavy heart—Settlement of Arabel's plans—Her own choice—Only Henrietta can go to her this summer—Later, Arabel can come out to Italy—London at present impossible—R. B. has taken to riding—Pen, letter, music, languages—Aunt Jane.

The house taken by Arabel was 7 Delamere Terrace, Paddington.

For Mrs. Prinsep, see Letter 81.

Florence,
June 2, 1857.

MY DARLING HENRIETTA,

Your letter is very reviving. How good and like yourself to write it ! The time passes—heavily, heavily : but it passes. It's hard to carry a heavy heart on from the beginning of a day to the end, but one carries it somehow. And I try to make use of occupation, besides of the good thoughts which God leaves to me—I thank Him.

Dearest Henrietta, our beloved Arabel would not *need* to " talk five minutes " with me to persuade me into wishing her to do precisely as she wishes. You see I was at the moment a little disappointed : but that is over ; and from the first I have known that every human being who is able to choose a life should do it for himself and herself as he and she *sees*, and not as another sees. And if Storm is satisfied when he comes back that everything should be settled by everybody

apart from him, there is nothing to regret—though I do fear rather that Arabel will have to make a larger pull on her principal in taking and furnishing that house than she has an idea of now. You and I know something of the expense of furnishing a house, and how a great deal of money slips through the fingers in mere necessaries which one would fancy from a distance to cost nothing.

Well—she will judge best, I dare say ; and I hope you will go to her as she desires, dearest Henrietta—you must and will. For me, it is not possible this summer—nor if it were, should I consider it at all desirable even for Arabel's own sake. There will be fuss and agitation enough without such an addition. Also, if we went to London we could not bring her back with us to Italy, (if she would come, dear thing) we could only take her as far as Paris which would not please her so well, nor be nearly so good for her.

Now, when the summer is over, and that darling Arabel has arranged everything to her mind, she can come to us and we will go to Rome or Naples or wherever else she pleases ; and I shall not have been knocked down and spoilt for it as I always am by a summer in England. Those two summers I have come away ill—(if you had seen me after I left you last autumn !) and Robert would be very averse not to let me have the advantages of repose and climate this summer.

And if you knew what London is to us. Why, you have not an idea ! To go there and be quiet would be impossible. People tear us to pieces, Robert and me. And if, by shutting the door, we escaped the class represented by Mrs. Prinsep and her peers, we could not refuse to see others who are our friends in another sense, and would be sorely piqued against us if we did not clasp their hands. For such things—for London and Paris, this year—I am not in a condition. I couldn't bear it—it would drive me mad, I think. So we shall stay here quietly as long as the heat will allow of, and then go to the mountains or the sea—somewhere where we can rest as well.

. . . Robert has taken to riding which he is passionately fond of. I hope Arabel will wisely invest her money, so that

she may find it sufficient. If she had been in the country she might have had a carriage, which would have been so good for her. London is *not good*. She writes to me dear precious letters. Oh if she will but be well and happy how I shall love her more than ever, and think her right in everything. May God bless her, dear darling.

. . . Give my love to dearest aunt Jane. I love her for her kindness to you, Henrietta ; and never shall I forget what she did for both of us last year. May God bless her.

Kiss the darlings for me. My true love, and Robert's to Surtees. May God keep you, beloved Henrietta, as He can. Write.

Your ever attached

BA.

92

Arabel is with Henrietta at the sea—Third visit to Lucca—Lytton comes—Disadvantages for R. B.—Stuffy situation—Can't take in Lytton, though might stretch for Henry—Books and piano—draws, too much for poetry—Lytton reads poetry aloud—R. B. Learning modern languages—Sadness ; must try to put things right ; perhaps vexes others.

The sisters were staying at Seaton in Devonshire. Bonser was lady's maid to Arabel, who was now losing her services, for on the break up of the Wimpole Street home, she married the footman.

For Robert Lytton, see Letter 49.

La Villa, Bagni di Lucca, Toscana,
Aug. 4, 1857.

MY BELOVED HENRIETTA,

I must write to you, though I shall have to throw this to the general post office, not knowing your address. But I do hope I shall have a letter from Seaton before you get this. I am anxious about you both, you and our darling Arabel. The change and the sea air will in all probability have set you up again. Pray don't be in a hurry to go away, and pray hold Arabel tight that she may not go away—for it struck *me* there were symptoms already of her being restless to get back to that horrible London which at the present time of year is so

contrary to nature. Hold her tight, Henrietta. Do the children bathe? Are their dear cheeks sprouting roses?

As for us, we have left Florence at last, and have been here since the day before yesterday. We lingered still after taking our house here, through the sudden apparition of Robert Lytton, whom we didn't like to leave directly, since he was in Florence chiefly for us. He found it intolerably hot of course, having been entirely *dis*-acclimatized by four years (nearly) in the north, and his intention, when we left him, was to follow us as soon as we could look out for accommodation suitable to him.

This place is cooler than Florence—in the evenings and at night comparatively quite cool—but I am half sorry to have come, because of Robert, who will certainly find it dull, knowing as he does all the country by heart, and who leaves behind quantities of interest in various ways. We have a rather pretty house—a most beautiful garden—long alleys of walks, oleanders of majestic proportions, and all colours—tall trees—and standard peach-tree, like a forest tree—a great terrace with curtains to shut out the sun, opening on said garden—very pretty. Only the rooms themselves are small, and the number not equal to what was promised. Also, the situation admits of no views but the garden. It's what may be called "stuffy" with trees. Side glances at mountain-tops from one or two windows, but no view. And houses and hotels pressing, elbowing one a little, behind the trees. It's not my favourite position, certainly. Still, there's the garden—and we shall shall get out on the mountains presently. . . .

We fancied we might have taken in Lytton for a while, but we can't unfortunately—though if Henry would come (which he won't) we would manage—the very walls would stretch, I think. Only I don't waste myself in hoping, I am so sure he won't or can't come.

. . . I have brought a mass of books from the circulating library which I can change as I read them, there being a daily carrier between this place and Florence. And we find a pretty good piano. The worst is that Robert has no models for his drawing, and no studio. Well—now poetry must have its

turn, and I shall not be sorry for that. He has taken a passion for drawing, and through the facilities of Florence, devotes himself to it too much, perhaps, neglecting his own art.

We had several delightful evenings, by the way, at Isa's villa before we came off; on that exquisite terrace of her's, listening to new poems of Lytton's which he read musically and which seemed to receive modulation from the divine stars and ringing mountains. He talks of going to the lake of Como for a few months, to domesticate himself with some Italian family and acquire familiarity with the language, which is necessary to his diplomatic advancement. We must make our boys familiar with living languages, Henrietta, for the character of the times makes them indispensable to success in life. In fact, the world is *thrown open* now; and an intelligent man mustn't be simply an Englishman or a Frenchman but a citizen of all countries.

I write of these things, instead of writing as my heart would lead me—which would be at once sad and vain. I am anxious about you in *many ways*. When can another letter come from Storm? Is not Arabel uncomfortable about Bonser? It seems to me that there must be a great deal of discomfort and dreariness, *over and above* what is necessary—that's my impression; and I am moved in the spirit always to get up and meddle, and put everybody in the place I want them to stand in—which is foolish, and very provoking, I dare say.

Isn't Arabel vexed with me? Tell me the truth. Never mind. If she will but be well and satisfied, I shall learn wisdom in time, and how to keep my place and be silent. Then she will forgive me for having " pushed and pulled " and teazed about houses and lands and all the rest of it.

Dearest Henrietta try to write to me a good account of yourself and her. . . . Love to dear Surtees and the children. Robert's love. I love you, dear. My two dear sisters, may God bless you, prays your own

BA.

93

Uneasy about Arabel in London—She would not be happy in Italy —If necessary, would give up Florence to keep her in the south of France—Short visits no good—Perhaps France next spring—Perfect understanding with Henrietta—R. B. visitors uncongenial to Arabel—Friends near by—Lytton's illness.

The end of the letter, written on the following day, tells of the development of Lytton's illness. A full account of this and the strain of nursing him, which fell upon R. B. and their friend Isa Blagden, is given in *Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, ii, 267 *seq.*

La Villa, Bagni di Lucca, Toscana,
Aug. 15, 1857.

My beloved Henrietta,

Except for the dear love in your letter it has somewhat saddened me. Dear, I am afraid Arabel was looking very unwell when you saw her first at *least*, and she is so little strong really, what a miserable prospect for all of us, this resolution of hers to keep to London and the Refuge!

There can be no real vocation where there is no possibility; and she can't work to any purpose without strength—that's certain. The unreasonableness of it all vexes me to the soul: for I see plainly how it will be.

I entreat you, Henrietta, to keep her as long in the country as you can. You know the notion of paying bills, of going to London to pay bills, is nonsense—nobody expects bills to be paid till Christmas; and a few weeks given to bodily refreshment, after all the agitation necessarily experienced, represents a debt to God's providence which she ought to pay unmurmuringly. I am very uneasy about her and shall remain so until a further account.

Dear Henrietta, dearest dear Henrietta, it does not disappoint me in the least to hear your preparation for her not coming to Italy this winter. I was quite prepared to hear it. After *just the first*, I knew it would be exactly so. And indeed I do agree with you, Henrietta, that there's much to be said against it, and Robert has always been saying it in my ears since the early letters on the subject. She would not like

Italy I am sure—she would be constantly pining for London, and I should be miserable in the sense of this. There's a great deal in the journey and in the country too, which would jar and be trying—and be contradictory to all her experiences, and these things are not overcome where there is not a strong taste and desire.

Then, in Florence, after november I might not be able to go about with her, and she might not like the people we saw or the way we lived—it would be dull and jarring. And if she went with us to Rome, the journey would be longer still, and some of these objections would hold.

As to your proposition about the south of France—it is as long a journey from England to Pau as from England to Italy—for us it is still longer. Still if we could see our way clearly—if for instance, Arabel had reasons for *believing* that Pau or Nice or any other place would benefit her health, and if our going there would facilitate her going, and if she would be content to go and remain *six or seven months* there, I do not doubt that Robert would agree to do that, for her dear darling, and for me in her.

But my own belief, Henrietta, is, that she would not be happy in any such arrangement. I believe not. When she wanted us to go to England, she baited her hook with this proposition—" she might (she would not promise) but she *might* go back with us to Florence for a month or two."

Now a month or two can do no good whatever, observe, it is simply absurd. She must go for seven months certain, or the harm risked (of returning to London and the journey) is greater than any good to be hoped for. If she had come here to Italy for *two or three years*, with a visit now and then in the summer to England, she would probably have renewed her health altogether* : but now, that being all at an end, we must look to the next best thing to be done.

She must not be put into a situation by the wishes of any

* So uncertain is human life, that the strongest of the loving sisters, the one who never, scarcely, knew an ailment, the one to whom this letter was addressed, was taken *first*. The frail and delicate one, for whose health they were so anxious, outlived her sisters for years, though residing, from choice, in London, which they so much deprecated.—S. A.

of us, which she might find intolerable—I myself think (with whatever regret) that the best plan may be to wait quietly until the spring, and then that she should meet us in Paris. There we could stay as long as we pleased, and then go together to one of the many pleasant French summer-places, at Fontainebleau or elsewhere, and have a quiet summer together. Who knows but we might draw you over to us, dearest Henrietta, and give an opportunity of talking French to the Althams? Robert says he would go anywhere next summer that Arabel would fix upon,—anywhere. We must be in Paris, you see, to begin with. And the journey to Paris can alarm nobody—it is less fatiguing than to Ventnor from London.

Well—I have written. Against my own interest, I was going to say: but no, my interest is our darling Arabel's interest. I wish simply for her happiness. As to being *hurt* in the least degree by her not coming to Italy this year, I am not so dull. I understand perfectly. I write all this to *you*, dearest, since it is *you* who have touched upon it with me,—and you will be able to set her dear heart at ease as to its engagements to me. We love one another too closely to be fretted for a little. A darling she is. Perhaps if she resolves on staying in England this winter, Storm will have her for a few weeks now and then, (and if, as I hope, Storm will be not far from *you*, so much the better) and save her a little from that horrible London.

Oh yes—you will be quite right to pay her a little visit—it will be nice for both of you. If I were as you are, I would have caught at her invitation in its full folded generosity, be sure. But with us it is so very different. It would be so impossible.

If you knew! There would be *gêne* on both sides. The irregularities of our house are scandalous—not immoral, observe, but scandalous. From morning till night people are running out and in—all sorts of people; and when we are in London we can't help it. There are men who come and talk—talk, some of them did last summer, till one in the morning—and the freest sort of philosophy is talked. Robert would be

in agonies of annoyance even if Arabel could bear it. Fancy Mr. Stratton elbowed on the staircase by Mr. so and so whose " aim in life " is to " subvert christianity ! ! " Why Arabel shrinks at the idea from the distance. Ah ! persuade her of it, that we will give her ample occasion to exercise her virtue of hospitality, notwithstanding all.

. . . There is an hotel elbowing us too near, but our Florence friends Isa Blagden, Annette Bracken, and Robert Lytton are in it, having followed us from Florence. Lytton has an attack of nervous fever, I am sorry to say, and we are all rather anxious. . . . He exposed himself to the sun in Florence, and not having been acclimatized suffered accordingly. The heat has been excessive indeed. . . . I go about with one of those great hats like umbrellas. I had a brown one dyed black at Florence for the purpose. . . .

My beloved Henrietta, love me. Your

BA.

94

Is anything but angry—Intervention solely for Arabel's good—Pen and Annunciata ill as well as Lytton—Pen revolts against all these strange maids—Arabel and a servant with lively " atmosphere "—India.

Another account of Peni's illness, dwelling on different circumstances, appears in *Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, ii, 273. For Bonser, see Letter 92.

Bryngwyn, a charming house not far from Oswestry, was at this time the home of their brother Charles, " Stormie."

Florence,
Oct. 12, 1857.

MY BELOVED HENRIETTA,

Angry with you ? no, indeed, I haven't felt stamina enough of late to feel angry with anybody—and with you, my dear dear sister, who are made of *cream* (not a drop of acid in you !) with *you*, for whom I have felt so very anxiously and tenderly more than usual of late, how could I be angry, with ever such a vocation to anger ?

No, dear, indeed. I didn't answer what you said, simply

because it seemed to me you did not quite understand, and I despaired of explaining myself. I knew I might leave it to your own reflections, not to wrong my devoted love to Arabel, —not to think (in the long run) that I *could* mean the slightest neglect or unkindness of *her*. But for the rest, no, indeed, I was not angry.

I just say this and no more. I dare say all the arrangements are right. I have always held that people should choose their own lives and live them clearly ; and certainly I ought to keep to it now. At the bottom of most of my objections was the idea, that Arabel would hurt herself by that life in London. That it is specifically bad for her, I believe : and it is quite evident that one may talk of work and work, but that a person out of health can have no sort of real vocation for work of that kind.

Well—we may wait and see. If she keeps pretty well, and continues satisfied, I shall be only too happy. I require nothing, as God knows, but *simply that*. My short-comings on another point, you can fill up, you know ; and then we can be all together in London at once—Only the very name of London makes me sick and sad. Don't let us talk of it.

Dearest Henrietta, you will have heard of my Penini's illness ; and now you will like to hear that he is quite well, quite himself—that we arrived at Florence yesterday, and that to-day he went as usual to take his music-lesson from his master in this street, and that it's difficult to keep him from too long walks and too much play. The people here can scarcely see that he has been ill. But indeed he was ill—very ill—nearly a fortnight in bed ; and I heard the evening before we left Lucca, that during several days at the commencement of his illness the Italian doctor had feared much lest the disorder was *milliary* fever (instead of gastric) a sort of typhus, prevalent at times in Tuscany. Gastric fever was bad enough. Little Joseph Story died of it before our eyes in Rome.

But in Peni's case the symptoms were not severe, not as severe as Mr. Lytton's. . . . Two nights he was very ill, and one morning he looked dreadfully—as white as this paper. Oh my Peni, what I suffered in looking at him !

Think too of Wilson's having to go away in the midst ; and then of Annunciata whom he had become reconciled to, being seized with gastric symptoms—she too. Of course you and Arabel will be probably wrong nevertheless. There were certain disposing influences in the air—that was all. Annunciata recovered after three or four days bed-keeping. The wonder is that *I* recovered, from the fatigue and anxiety. I was running backwards and forwards night after night. Almost it was an epidemic.

So sweet and good Peni was all the time. " Dearest beloved Ba " he kept saying to me—" I do love you so."

Then he was tried so by having strangers near him. On Annunciata's being taken ill he chose to have one of her sisters. But Giuseppina, whom he selected could not come—and Maria (his next choice) had to go away to a lady (who had engaged her) ; and we were reduced to the youngest sister Estere, a girl in her teens, who had never been in service. When poor Peni got better he found a drove of girls in his bedroom, Estere, Annunciata and Pistolina. So said Peni :

" Io non voglio essere vestito da tutte le donne nel mondo : anzi andate via tutti, e lasciate Annunciata sola."

He wouldn't be dressed by all the women in the world, not he. Then Annunciata began again her special function.

I can't tell you how satisfied I am with her. There is a drawback, I suppose, somewhere, but so far we haven't found it. Her activity and intelligence are really great, and her good nature and kindness not less. And except that she always insists on kissing my hand when she puts me to bed (a Tuscan fashion) I haven't a fault to find.

See what an account of our household I have given you. Do the same by me. . .

And there's poor Arabel. Oh, it does vex me to think of Bonser. And that one whom she is about to take in Bonser's place, though an excellent dressmaker, is not the sort of person I should like for myself. I'm a Swedenborgian you know, and believe in " spheres," " atmospheres " and " influences." I liked Bonser's lively manner, and wish Arabel could get a vivacious affectionate person by her, a little amusing

at need. Don't *you?* Surely there are such people to be met with.

Meantime it was very good of you to let that sunbeam called little Mary pay her a visit. So dear Altham is like Peni, and won't leave Papa and Mama?

Dearest Henrietta, I hope you will be able to go to Bryngwyn—you will give pleasure to Storm, and it will do you good. He is a dear fellow and always was, and I love him with my whole heart. My love to dear Surtees. Tell him that I hold him in true esteem—" sénza complimente," as the Italians say.

I shall write to Arabel in a day or two,—to *Bryngwyn*. Oh, what *horrors in India!* The English future there, is terrible to foresee. May God bless you all.

Ever your attached

BA.

95

Peni, his music, work and play with Annunciata—" Pen's " decorative trowsers—Children and mourning; death of Powers' child.

Florence,
Oct. 28, 1857.

MY EVER DEAREST HENRIETTA,

. . . As to Peni he is quite himself, and we have difficulty in remembering sometimes that we ought to be more careful for him than we used to be. As for over-working him —your counsel is quite wise—only indeed and indeed we *never* do such a thing. Music he has such a passion for, that, now the dryest part is over, it never seems to tire him. I should put an end to it in a moment if it were as it used to be when there was up hill-work. . . .

For the rest his mind is more fixed in play than anything else; Annunciata is a capital play-fellow. I find her running about all the rooms of the house with her eyes blind-folded; and the other day she appeared in the drawing-room attended by Peni with shouts of laughter, in a complete male costume, trowsers and all!! Combine with this the most zealous activity as to all sorts of work, (and put away for a moment

your English ideas of decency, do you add ?) and you will understand how satisfied we should be with her. Good-humoured, gay, affectionate, and such prodigious activity—I only hope we shan't stumble upon some enormous fault one of these days.

Now you ask me about Peni's trowsers, and I shall answer you categorically. The first time he rode a donkey at the Baths of Lucca, through wild places in a wild manner, he came back with his embroidery all in rags—such of it as was visible at all : and when Wilson and I exclaimed, he said consolingly—

" Oh, but I have it still ! I have taken great care of it ! ! " And straightway pulled the fragments out of his pocket. He had rescued the torn pieces from the rocks and briars as he went on and pocketted them carefully.

Well, as this was not very satisfactory, I had a pair of long white jean trowsers made for him to ride in. But these were simply riding-trowsers, and I would not for the world have them used on other occasions. They are so ugly, Henrietta,—so unnecessarily ugly at his age even—much more at Altham's. Above all things, run no risks. *I* would not for any degree of prettiness. Pen wears black silk, or black velvet blouses, and black hat and feather : but he has never put off his embroidery, for the collar and the trowsers. I did not think it necessary at his age. Did Altham ?

My *sentiment* is very strong against the deep-mourning-forms for young children—and for the rest, there are reasons into which I need not enter to-day, which make me generally very unsettled as to that subject even as it relates to others than children.

Here are Mr. and Mrs. Powers who have lost their *favourite* child, their prettiest, after three days illness. The stroke over powered them, and *she* looks like a shadow ! so changed, so changed ! But not an inch of crape does she wear ; and the whole family go about in coloured dresses. That, I think, is a want of taste, in as far as it is exceptional to custom : but as a matter of feeling they are right, right, right, according to their own views and what they think they have learnt. I could

tell you more of this. We know more than we used to know. But it shall be for another time. . . .

Your ever loving

BA.

96

Christmas a sad anniversary this year—Pen's festa—Arabel drops homœopathy—Bryngwyn—Crinolines.

This letter is addressed to Bryngwyn, when Henrietta was staying with her brother Charles John (Stormie).

Florence,
Christmas and Dec. 30, 1857.

I owe you a letter, my dearest Henrietta, and I just now have one from my dearest Arabel—so I join both of you in this sheet which will find you together at Bryngwyn—for I must write a few lines on this Christmas Day thinking of you both, loving you all, dear Storm and all of you, and praying God, as I do from the bottom of my heart, to bless and love you each one. Our Christmas day here is not merry, except for our Peni who is overjoyed with his gifts and all the rest. As the spirits are said to see the things of the earth through the eyes of the embodied, so do I through his blue eyes see these Christmas joys. He is so glad—it is nearly enough for me. Altogether the gifts shower, justifying those numerous white specks on his thumb-nails which he has been counting so long, poor darling.

Tuesday. I write on, taking up the thread. Isa Blagden and Fanny Haworth dined with us on Christmas Day, and Annette Bracken and Mr. Lytton came later in the evening. Mrs. Jameson was engaged elsewhere.

Two evenings later, Peni had his own particular " festa " in his own particular rooms. You must know that Peni's idea for a festa, is to have an illumination ; and you English people would have opened your eyes on the spectacle which met Robert's and mine, when we were invited to see that great sight. Hundreds of little wax torches were stuck all over the high stove and walls, all ablaze, with strings of pictures, rows

of toy-soldiers—you never saw anything so fantastic—really pretty, and quite absurd. Peni and his boy-friends keeping guard with drums and guns and swords. Wilson, and a heap of Italian girls (invited by Peni) standing by in admiration; and a table spread with cakes and oranges and tea and wine! Of course we thought it wonderfully beautiful. Peni's whole imagination had been concentrated on the great idea for a month back.

My darling Arabel's letter lighted me up like Peni's tapers: but I am not easy about her—nor about the remedies prescribed. How strange that Arabel who believed in homeopathy has now thrown it over. In all chronic affections, the allopathists are impotent, *I* believe. In pleurisies and fevers I would go to them; but for constitutional and chronic affections, the homeopathists are infinitely superior—in fact they CAN *do something*.

It is very pleasant to think of you all tied up in a nosegay of love at Bryngwyn for this Christmas. May God be with you now and always. Bryngwyn must be beautiful from your description; and I dare say the rides and walks about the place are full of attraction. . . .

Tell me do you and Arabel give in, or rather give out to the hoop-decrees? I have a regular hoop-petticoat, and sweep out into an excess of majestic circumference, much to Robert's satisfaction, and Mrs. Jameson's displeasure: but after all it is not an ungraceful fashion, though I hesitated before taking the plunge. . . .

When you write, tell me of your children. I care so much for those little details about them, such as I send you. Hume has not arrived yet, and perhaps will not come after all.

I send you all round, you Bryngwyn people, quantities of kisses and loves.

Here Mrs. Jameson comes, and I can't write a word more or read over.

Dearest Henrietta's ever attached

BA.

97

Birthday letter—Mr. Twisleton holds their educational theories; languages, music—Fanny Haworth's portrait of Peni—Would like to visit America—Egypt also, but expensive—R. B. after influenza tries homœopathy—The next -ism—Henry Barrett's wife—All virtues in an English residence—A bad winter—The Orsini plot.

This "very intelligent man," Edward T. B. Twisleton, Fellow of Balliol and later of London University and Hon. Student of Christ Church, Oxford, was a barrister and politician, who enjoyed the curious distinction of having "probably served on more commissions than any other man of his time."

Amelia is the bride of their brother Henry.

The Orsini plot against the life of Napoleon III. had been hatched in England. Among the refugees, Mazzini approved the theory of political assassination as a last resort. To a sharp protest from France, Palmerston kept silence, but introduced a Conspiracy Bill. The growing opposition to this supposed truckling to foreign menaces and curtailment of British liberty clearly must have been "the late House of Commons movement," which so offended Mrs. Browning as a Napoleonist as well as a lover of abstract justice.

Casa Guidi, Florence,
March 4, 1858.

My beloved Henrietta,

I shall begin a letter to you to-day even if I don't finish it; but finish it I will if I can. Dear, I have been negligent of you lately, if *seeming* were *being*: only it isn't; and you have understood that my letters to Arabel were intended to sweep you by a side wave—writing to her was writing to you. I have thought of you and loved you. I think of you and love you. I bid God bless you, dear dearest, now and always; and that prayer asks Him to bless *yours*, of course—yours being the best part of you—dear Surtees, the darling children—all of you. . . .

Mr. Twisleton (Lord Saye and Sele's brother—and a very intelligent man) told me the other day in speaking of education, that a learned university friend of his had a theory of what

great things might be done if the childhood of a boy were devoted to the living languages (so easily acquired in childhood); and the seven years necessary to the dead languages were taken from his life after fifteen. This was said without a thought of Peni of course: but Robert and I exclaimed, we having had something of the same idea. Not that we shall wait till he is fifteen to begin Latin with him: only we shall not be in a hurry with Latin, which he will get on faster with, having the advantage of a somewhat more matured intelligence. At present, music swallows up most of his time. Not that I grudge it—the faculty is too obviously there to be cultivated. You can't think how the child's face lights up while he plays. Fanny Haworth has made a quite lovely picture of him at the piano, looking like an inspired little Mozart. Well, don't think me too conceited. I humbly wish sometimes that he spelled as well as he plays—for that is by no means the case. . . .

Dearest Henrietta, it was with pain I heard of the departure to Jamaica, as you may suppose—and in that horrid creeping David Lyon too, which I have no manner of reason for respecting. They will be weeks and weeks on the sea. What an absurdity to go, it seems to me. If I crossed those seas, I would go to America at once, and sometimes I feel rather inclined. I should like to see some things in America—but still, but still—no, we shan't go, I think.

Egypt would suit us better; and to Egypt we shall certainly, if we live, go some day. The drawback is the enormous expense—a guinea a day each person, including a servant and child—and we can't go without a maid for Peni and me; and three or four months on the Nile alone, at twenty eight guineas a week. Of course this is a thing to do in the winter if at all. Then there's a week's sea voyage almost.

We have had a most exceptional winter here—cold and miserable—only neither vines nor olives have died, because there was no damp with the cold. Now—there is rain and sun and warmth. Everybody has had influenza; and Robert was so exceedingly unwell, that he was persuaded to try homœopathy. He submitted, with a smile of scorn, to give it a fair trial. By degrees the scorn disappeared—there seemed

" really something in it "—undeniably he " felt better." Now he has a regular healthy appetite. If he begins by being an homeopathist he will end by being a spiritualist, I prophesy to him. So positive he used to be on this subject. He takes the globules in water, which is now considered the strongest form. Certainly the medicine takes hold of the constitution. I would not trust to it where a rapid *shock* to the system is necessary (as in the case of sudden inflammation or fever) but in any chronic affection, I really *would*. We are going to buy bottles and a book, so as to have our fate in our own hands—so far !

Mind you send me a description of Amelia. I wish it had fallen out so that you could have been neighbours. I had fancied it might have been.

Mrs. Martin wrote to me from Paris, and said that the Hedleys were *not* as charmed as usual with their continental winter,—which wouldn't be regrettable, said she, if it made them more satisfied with their English residence. (An English residence seems to secure all virtue, I reflected, even with dear Mrs. Martin !)

As for me I have not, neither had, a charming continental winter. I am a rag of a woman through weakness (from the cold) but I have not had cough *as* I had it in England. Oh, no—and dull and sad as I have been, this arm chair of mine and the German circulating library, have served me excellently. I am quite as little inclined as ever, tell dear Surtees, (at least as little) to his great park which only required ten thousand a year to keep it up. In fact, (between little Mary and me) I am grown horribly un-English on the late House of Commons movement, at which I gnash my teeth with rage. . . .

May God bless you ever, prays your tenderly attached

BA.

98

An inflamed eye accounts for interrupted correspondence—Altham's pony and therefore leggings—R. B. and thoroughness in teaching—Plans : Egypt ; Jerusalem—Henry's marriage—Eye out of the house of bondage—Hume and his bride—Conjugal furniture.

In March Hume became engaged to the daughter of the Count de Kroll, a general in the Russian service, and god-daughter of the Czar Nicholas ; he was now on his way to St. Petersburg, where the marriage took place.

Florence,
April 28, 1858.

Eyes or no eyes, my beloved Henrietta, I won't let you think of me as you *may* well be thinking—who knows ? To explain my alternative set above, I will tell you that I finished my last letter to Arabel, intending to begin one to you in two days, because I felt painfully conscious of *owing* you thanks and tender words of various kinds.

But while writing that letter (written by bits) I was suffering a little (though I did not name it) with a strange malady for me, namely inflammation in one eye,—caught from a draught at a window, and neglected at the commencement. I thought nothing of it—a mere bloodshot eye—but no sooner had I sent my letter to the post, than the inflammation increased,—" making the *white*, one red," and the irritation and pain by night and day grew so keen, that I had to be shut up in the dark, with lotions instead of literature, not able to read a word, —quite a trial to me, as you may suppose—especially as just now, I want air and vivification of all kinds to put down my weakness.

Ah well—now it's all not worth talking of. I am able to write as you observe, and to read again, and I have been out three times in the carriage, and the windows are wide open to the sun. I tell you, because otherwise you should not have waited the last fortnight at least, for this letter. . . .

And now for the precious children. You did not tell me that dear Storm had given a pony to Altham. What a good

dear thought that was in him. I am so glad.* You forgot to tell me; and so I confess I did wonder a good deal over the "leather gaiters" which seemed to me "un peu fort" for donkey riding. What sort of pony is it? what height? very quiet I hope. Peni accounts Altham a most enviable person: but you are to understand that we won't be altogether out done, for that Robert has spoken to the master of the riding-school here in Florence, who lets out horses, and who when he has found a small enough small pony, is to teach Peni to ride on it at his school, and then to let it out for him to ride with Robert. Of course Robert might teach the child as well, I think: but he always fancies that things should be done fundamentally, or scientifically, and so Pen's to be regularly instructed. The Sardinian ponies are as celebrated as the Shetland, but we don't feel tempted to buy—moving about so much—vagabonds without a caravan! . . .

Robert holds me by an oath to Ægypt in the winter: but there's the summer in the meantime! As to Ægypt, it's all water-travelling, which to me is not hard, if Robert likes to brave it for himself—and we must get a piano on board our boat, for Peni, at Alexandria. Jerusalem isn't possible for *me*, we have ascertained from our friends. Certainly, if I had gone, I should have been buried in the sand somewhere—that's clear. But I must not cross Robert about Ægypt. Only it's a long time off, to talk of; and as for me, I haven't breath even for the plans of this summer. . . .

Arabel has just sent me a long letter—tell her, a long letter!! —to communicate the date of dear Henry's marriage. I had the news too late to "remember it on wednesday," but *when* we knew, we drank to his health, dear fellow, and her's. I think I shall like her very much. I shall write to him: but where to address the letter is a difficulty!

Write and tell me all your news. Robert scolds me for

* This pony, called Bryngwyn after the uncle's then house in North Wales, proved a great success, a marvellous little animal, and carried the donee and his brother Edward over many a stiff fence with hounds in Somerset, for years,—until they grew too heavy. Even now, 1876, she still canters and trots over the Quantock Hills with the youngest sister on her back. She was foaled in 1855, and was unbroken when presented by the kind uncle in 1858.—S. A.

writing so much : but I consider my eye out of the House of bondage, now.

So disappointed I am about Hume. He has passed on to Marseilles with his bride. Certainly her taste must be extraordinary. She is rather good-looking and apparently five and twenty. How strange the fortunes of that young man are. And she ! Think of the conjugal furniture floating about the room at night, Henrietta. My friend Mr. Jarves spent a night with Hume once, (when enquiring into the subject,) and a four-posted-bed was carried into the middle of the room—shadowy figures stood by the pillow, or lay down across the feet of those about to sleep—nothing threatening, everything kind ; but, at best, extremely disturbing.

When can we hear from Jamaica ? Now I shall write no more. My best love, (and Robert's) to dear Surtees ; and heaps of kisses to the children.

Your ever loving

BA.

99

Communicates through Arabel—Paris ; invalidism seems a humbug —French seaside places ; civilisation needed—Meeting hoped for—Paris beautiful—High church clergyman—Lady Elgin dying —Future plans—Bonnets and petticoats—Arabel and an escort.

Ultimately Arabel, escorted by her brother George, joined them in Havre, whither they had gone with R. B.'s father and sister. See Letter 101.

Lady Augusta Bruce, daughter of the seventh Earl of Elgin, was Resident Bedchamber woman to Queen Victoria, who was deeply attached to her, and thought it the greatest sorrow in her life, since the death of Prince Albert, when Lady Augusta " most unnecessarily " decided to leave the Royal service and marry Dean Stanley (Letters of Queen Victoria, November 12th, 1863).

Hotel Hyacinthe, S. Honoré, Paris,
July 9, 1858.

Indeed I have behaved ill to you, my beloved Henrietta, only I count always on your having, in rebound, my letters to

Arabel, and there was occasion to write to her. But, dearest, I have thought much of you ; and you put spirit and joy into me by what you wrote last of yourself and the children and of all mine. So grateful I was to you for that letter.

You will have heard, before you get this, that we are in Paris, and how we prospered on the road, and how quite convalescent I am. Robert declares I shall be set down as a " humbug," I have recovered my looks so ! Still, I keep on with my medical discipline, and it is necessary, I suppose. I am not to bathe when we arrive at the sea—neither in hot nor cold baths : but to use the salt water at home.

We have a list of places by the coast, between Havre and Dieppe. Trouville I rather lean to, though it is said to be somewhat fashionable and dear : but it is French dearness—few English go there ; and the sands are said to be magnificent, and the conveniences of life abundant. And, you see, I don't want to go out into the wilderness. I must have books and newspapers, and Pen must have a piano—and we must all have carriages and horses, or else I, for one, may sit at the window for two months—seeing that walking is not my *forte ;* and the rest of us will be a good deal restrained, if we have no means of wandering beyond the beach.

Dearest Henrietta and Surtees, what do you think of my scheme (or rather dream) of your coming over to join us on the French coast *instead of going to London.* You might steam from Southampton to Dieppe or Havre ; and the children would be the better for sea and change, and go back to England with plenty of French and health. See if it would not be a good kind affectionate plan on your part—see ! Then you could return to Bryngwyn for the rest of the year, and I should have had my share. I won't tease. I won't tease even Arabel —though I have pulled her by the sleeve a very little in my last letter. I won't tease. I only entreat your attention. . . .

Nothing in the shape of a city can be more beautiful than Paris. Wonderfully developped in architectural beauty it is. Even with eyes full of Italy we stand loudly admiring.

And there is a Mr. Gurney here as a clergyman, who would please you and Surtees—steeple-high in doctrine, but gentle

in discourse. He has just been here talking, only not theology.

Poor Lady Elgin is dying. She has been past speech for long, but her face lighted up when she heard we were coming. Now, within these two days she has had a new attack, and it is absolutely impossible, say the medical men, that she can survive it. Her son has come from England, and she has two daughters with her : but they have not *told* Lady Augusta who is with the Duchess of Kent ! This seems to me very wrong. They " don't like to take her away." Lady Elgin " wouldn't recognise her "—these are the reasons. I cannot admit them. In a day or two all will be over. The dear Hedleys will be very sorry to hear this.

We are to be back in Florence at the end of September, Dr. Harding said ; but we shall probably stay into October. Then we go home—whence after a month or two we go to the Nile—or to Rome. Robert won't have the sharp Florence winter for me, this time.

Bonnets are rather larger than they were—that is, worn more in front. Petticoats are still comprehensive, and hoops regnant. I had one long ago. Mrs. Jameson lectures me for my obedience to fashions, but she rather should lecture Robert —and does sometimes. I confess for my own part I have rather a weakness for the sweeping petticoats. In Italy they are invaluable for coolness. A hoop and a dress equips you. Here indeed we don't want preservatives against heat. Yet it *has been* intensely hot here, and the present weather is the reaction under the influence of thunderstorms—people tell us.

Don't *you* think, dearest Henrietta that Arabel had better come to me at once ? *I* do. Why she should wait I can't understand. George is necessary to *me*, but his convoy is not to her.

God bless you, dearest dear Henrietta. Love me. I love you dearly, and think of you fondly, especially now when we are near, yet don't touch. *May* we touch. God grant it. Love to dear Surtees, and the darlings.

Your Ba.

100

More plans—Arabel hesitates—Hopes of " demoralizing " her in Paris—Sightseeing and Arabel—Henrietta cannot come—Mr. Gurney's heresies as to spiritualism—Spirits *tutoyer* people—Is early on track of beliefs to be—Writings, etc., in Paris—Comfortable hotel—" Talk " a letter—Lady Elgin and R. B.; her character.

Mr. Eaton is the accepted suitor of E. B. B.'s cousin, Ibbet Hedley.

Paris,
July, 1858.

My beloved Henrietta,

Your letter was most welcome, and it was like light and perfume together when you said that Arabel was looking well. Yet at the end came news of the cold—which I did not like at all. What has she being doing to catch cold at this time of year. Dearest Henrietta, I might fret myself into a very reasonable state of vexation with that naughty darling Arabel notwithstanding all your apologies for her. Oh—that's what she says, is it?—that even if you were not there, she wouldn't come to me? Then, *I* say —— —— no, I don't. I rein myself on. Tell her I shall forgive her *crime* and almost forget my wrong—but *only* on the one condition that she stays with us at Etretat or wherever we go, and returns with us to Paris to stay here as long as we remain in France. We return here after about two months at the sea, and shall remain in Paris till the weather drives us out. October is sometimes a beautiful month here, and as a day's journey carries us into shelter southwards, we need not fear till the middle of that month at earliest, I should think. I have set my heart on demoralizing her a little in Paris, and she must be good and kind after all the accumulated disappointments I have labored under on her account,—for when I talk of " demoralizing " I don't mean that I shall insist on her going to the opera or " vexing her righteous soul " (dear and precious as it is to me) with the least uncomfortable crossing of ways and views: but there are quantities of things we could see and do together from which I, at least, should have infinite pleasure, and by

that time I shall be up to the top of my usual energies—if it pleases God. As it is, I am like another being from what I was two months since, so much stronger and better in all ways am I, to sight as well as feeling.

But still, I can't do much. I break suddenly like a stick at a certain point and it comes early. The other day Mrs. Jameson invited us to dine at a certain restaurant. After dinner we drove to the Bois de Boulogne which, after the excitement of eating and talking, was beyond me rather : but then and there came a proposition to enter the Prés Catellans (a sort of Cremorne Gardens included in the Bois). We paid each three francs, Robert and I, and Mrs. J. and her sister, and the carriage drove round the *Prés*—very beautiful in the lamps, —and worth visiting for any one able to enjoy the concerts and various amusements for which the three francs are meant to pay : but as I was, by that time, perfectly extinct, and couldn't stir from the carriage or even speak as I sate, why I had the satisfaction of spoiling everybody's pleasure ! Robert was vexed with Mrs. J. and I with myself, and so it ended.

But we have had (Robert, Peni, and I,) some very pleasant private drives in the Bois de Boulogne, and round about Paris ; and we have dined, on our own account, twice at the *Restaurant*, and are going again to-day.

As to other sights, I put off everything—even the ground floor rooms of the Louvre where there is a good deal to be seen in the way of new arrangements—so that really Arabel *must* come and help me—now mustn't she ? isn't it reasonable that she should ? Use your influence in a just cause.

As to you, my dearest dearest Henrietta, why if I can't have you, I can't. But the sea would have been excellent for the children, and so would the French—Never mind. My grapes are not sour, though out of reach ! let them hang ! You will write to me, dear, won't you, to make that poor amends. And dear little Altham is better already I hope and trust, and enjoying his " aunt Boo " and visit to London. Won't he and Mary forget their music in travelling ?

Tell me more of Mr. Eaton. I like particulars you know.

Ibbet's choice was rather "*par reflexion*"—wasn't it? He is very high-church, of course.

By the way mind you don't tell the Hedleys what I told Arabel of Mr. Gurney's *heresies*—dreadful word! It was in confidence that he delivered them, and he maintained that the Church had left the subject an open question &c. What struck and interested me on the whole was—not that Mr Gurney, the churchman, thought so and so—but that there was such an extraordinary spread of light from unacknowledged sources to sequestered places, in relation to the nature of the spiritual world.

People of all sorts hold more or less certain views and they don't exactly know why. It is curious from my point of sight. For myself I should like much to be able to tell you all, everything I know: but I can't yet at least. As might be supposed, all conventions (social conventions) perish—for instance French and Italian spirits will *tutoyer* and call by the Christian name everyone in the flesh: but for the rest, minute individualities, ways of speech and manners, are as much untouched by what we call *death*, as by putting off a cloak.

Also, there is nearness and consciousness beyond what any of you have a notion—there is less separation—I stop myself. A few years more, and these things will be received as a matter of common opinion: but in the meanwhile, I who have been thrown into the earlier track of them, by accidental circumstances, am unwilling to keep from you what is so inexpressible a consolation to those who are yet in the body.

Did I ever tell you of the *writings* which have taken place in Paris? I don't mean writings by the hands of mediums—but writings without the help of any earthly hand at all—and without pencil or ink. Papers are laid down, and, untouched by any medium, they cover themselves with written communications in different languages. Also, most beautiful drawings have been produced by these means. Smile Arabel—but such things are so indeed.

. . . We have been most comfortable in this hotel, and I shall regret the delicious arm-chairs when I get to the sea, it's almost certain. Where is Harry now? Write and tell me of

the children—and of all you do and say. Talk me a letter, dearest,—that naughty Arabel owes me one, and I want to hear about her cold. Only, of course, I must send you my address before you write. . . .

Lady Elgin, wonderful to say, is better, much better. Robert fed her with spoonfuls of soup yesterday; and her poor dumb face was full of smiles to have him there. She is a wonderful woman for life—life intellectual as well as spiritual. It is a third stroke of paralysis. But there she is, not only calm and radiant with Christ's promise, but interested in everything in earth as well as in Heaven—the Galignani at her side. We shouldn't wish to keep a woman of such energy tied up here—for it is not likely she should ever speak again.

Love to you all—love, love. I like to think of you together, my beloved sisters.

Your own loving BA *for ever*.

101

Delight in Arabel and her visit—Details of the children; fears of overwork—Sorry not to see them—Surtees and small ecclesiastical reproofs—Return to Paris with Arabel—Gifts.

To E. B. B.'s delight, her sister Arabel joined the Browning party at Havre, escorted by her brother George. Henrietta could not come: her family had whooping cough.

The hint of reproof about E. B. B.'s brothers lies in the fact that when they went abroad, they did not push on as far as Italy.

2, Rue de Perrey, Le Havre,
Aug. 31, 1858.

MY BELOVED HENRIETTA,

I am the most wretched of the ungrateful, to all appearances. You who send me an Arabel (to say nothing of the beautiful collar and sleeves!) and I who delay all this time without thanking you! Forgive me, dearest. After all you will understand in your kind tender sympathy how one may feel and be silent; or even be silent because one feels: and I, for my part, have been bewildered and confused, sometimes with joy, sometimes with pain: but oh, what great joy

to have my darling Arabel's face full on me, and to see it looking so well and so cheerful—dear dear thing! Never in my life did I see her looking better, and scarcely ever younger—for she looks as if she were twenty; and with her dear tranquil, bright soul shining out of her—what a comfort I shall take back with me to Florence. Quite satisfied I am about Delamere Terrace and the rest. She knows best what is best for her—as we all do: only we won't believe it of one another.

I am afraid I am spoiling her summer for her a little in keeping her here, for this Havre is the dullest of places and you did well in not coming here, my dearest Henrietta. In Paris, when we can get away there in some three weeks or so it will be better perhaps. There will be something to see. George talks of leaving us previously for Heidelberg, and of returning to take us up again at Paris. He looks well and radiant—and so kind! Then think of Harry's kindness in bringing his new wife to show me. She pleased me as she pleased all of you by her gentle nice manner, her good sense and affectionateness. What a fortunate man dear Harry is. He amused us by his vehement assertions that "Millikins was a most wonderful woman! Impossible to put her out of humour!" Not that he tries her much, I fancy.

. . . I make Arabel tell me all the details about your darlings. I squeeze her drop by drop like a sponge till I get everything out, and even now I haven't done squeezing. I have a dread of over-working a young brain. I am afraid of it for the body's sake, and also for the mind's; for it is not often that children, *pushed* in their education, make distinguished men! Take care of what you are about. Don't tire those tender brains. As to music it is hard brain work, be sure. Arabel recounts to me all your triumphs in the way of repetitions, dancing, &c. &c. yes, and music; and I listen admiringly. You have forward children, Henrietta. I am only afraid that you push and pull them a little hard.

Dearest Henrietta, I hate to reflect that I am about to go south again without seeing you and your darlings; and a change comes over each as the months pass, and we lose something. Tell them I love them dearly, and talk to me of them

when you write. May God bless you and enlighten all your countenances one towards another, dear dear things.

Then there's dear Surtees. Don't I miss those small kind ecclesiastical *reproofs* which I should always take as *proofs* of his brotherly love? Dear Surtees!

And see how I lose my own dear Stormie, not to speak of Occy and Set and Alfred. But then they needn't have lost me, if it had seemed worth while to find me.

. . . In Paris we shall stay till the cold expels us. Arabel goes with us and lives with us of course. Don't you feel how we talk of you. We do you on one side, and then turn you—like a knead cake!

One word more of the collar and sleeves! So very very pretty, and I thank you much. But you are naughty—it was not right. My love to dear Minny.

I love you, love you, love you all. Robert's love with mine and Pen's.

Your ever attached

BA.

102

Rome; long gap in writing—Letters an interruption to looking after children—Peni: music; mythology as useful knowledge—Is used to society—Runs on about Peni—Comfortable—Visitors—Portrait by Miss Fox—Portraits a Roman plague, like fleas—Peni's bust—Altham and blood sport—By carriage to Rome.

The Quaker sisters, Caroline and Anna Maria Fox, of Falmouth, who several times visited Italy, had a considerable position in literary society, as recorded by Caroline's "Journal." They were, in particular, friends of Mill, Sterling and Carlyle. Miss Fox's chalk portrait of Carlyle found no favour in the eyes of Mrs. Carlyle.

Rome, 43, Bocca di Leone,
Dec. 8, 1858.

MY BELOVED HENRIETTA,

I feel very naughty indeed when I think how I have not written to you since my Paris days: but then again, it has been rather appearance than reality,—for writing to

Arabel was much the same thing as to you, and I knew you would cede some rights to her on account of her solitude.

As for you, I can't help thinking of you as having too much to do to read my letters except in the greatest haste, between pauses in general conversation or interruptions in particular instructions of the children. For instance, by this writing, I cost Altham a whole five minutes from that French lesson—don't I, Altham ? or is it from the music ?

While I write, Peni is at his, practising vehemently : you would wonder to hear how those small fingers can draw out such a great noise—and how they can run, and leap—as if for their lives. He makes progress in his music, and one of these days will be somebody in music. It would have been a real wrong against faculty, if we had not let him learn. I brought away from Florence a heap of lesson-books by way of teaching him something useful. Did Arabel tell you how she laughed when I talked of the " necessity of teaching Peni something useful "—and *so* I " meant to teach him some *mythology*." She was much amused by my idea of what is useful. But this time, I brought with me quantities of general-knowledge books.

The people here who knew Peni before, think him perfectly unaltered, except in his height ; and he keeps up his popularity otherwise, I am glad to see, by being frank and sweet in his ways and manners. Of course the child's being used to society all his little peculiar life, gives him the advantage of a want of the usual childish shyness ; and as he is not pert, this is pretty in its effect.

Always I begin to talk to you of Peni and then never do I leave off. It is that unconsciously or consciously I want you to do the same by me and let me have every little detail about your darlings, that I may see them to the end of a ribbon or a shoe.

I shut my eyes and fancy them and you, and my dearest Storm and all the rest of you. Oh, I wish I could *open* my eyes and see you ! Well, well—the time is coming.

Meanwhile we are well off here. . . .

What I do complain of rather, is the quantity of visits—I foresee I shall be forced to shut myself up and fix a day for

being victimized. Rome is filling fast and will overflow this winter, it seems, in spite of the prices which are most extravagant. . . . .

I am sorry to say I have fallen into a trap already and am sitting for my portrait to Miss Fox, who prayed me to let her come and " do it." As I refused her once in London, I had not the heart to say a second " no " : but I groaned inarticulately instead. It is only in chalks. And I made a condition, that I should not be asked to sit beyond an hour at a time. One of the worst things at Rome is, that people have a phrenzy here for taking portraits—in marble or paints. It comes next to the fleas ! Robert is to submit to Mr. Leighton—but this is a secret.

O Henrietta, so beautiful my Peni's bust is ! Really exquisite it is. The only adverse criticism I have heard, was from Wilson, who thought it " too melancholy " for Pen,—but that effect comes from the blank marble eyes, for there is a half smile on the lips. I do hope Mr. Munro will get it advanced enough for Arabel to see it before she leaves London. . . .

I suppose you are all shooting and hunting all day long, and that Altham is in the death each way. Yes, I do wonder you suffer it, Henrietta. *I* wouldn't, I assure you,—but then I'm not " English," you know, and am full of fancies. I should ask Storm for a pony or donkey, or a light cart (still better) and wander about the hills to listen to the silence and catch the picturesque points—and should have nothing to do with the game—except helping to eat it ! Neither I nor Robert would,—nor Peni *should*, Henrietta. Such barbarians are we !

The most delightful journey we had from Florence,—seven days of it. So strange it is, living on the road in that way. We had books in the carriage, and I read through poems in German, and translated two or three of them. It was a luxurious sort of life,—so completely out of and in the world, at once ! We stopped in the middle of the day for two hours and had a kind of second breakfast, eggs and tea and coffee,—and then in the evening we dined. It was too late for me, but I managed it, and generally speaking our beds were clean and

comfortable enough,—and the fatigue was never up to the point of pain with me.

There are quantities of old acquaintances settled here—only too many!

I wish I had a photograph of Bryngwyn, and of your dining-table. May God bless you all. True love to Storm and all of you. Ever your most attached

BA.

103

Frequency of letters—R. B. caught up by society—Rome overrun by English—A superior Cheltenham—The Prince of Wales—Antipathy to English foreign policy—Argues with Jessie White (Mario)—Talfourd's portrait—Arabel's photograph is tragic—Pen's speech on Napoleon and United Italy—Society and odd dinners—Garlic and separation—Testimony to the spirits.

On this modified Grand Tour of the seventeen-year-old Prince, General Bruce was instructed to give him the advantage of conversing with men of distinction. The next letter tells how Browning dines with the Prince.

For E. B. B., English policy was all too cold towards Italian liberation, being chiefly concerned with preventing a European conflagration.

Lady William Russell, a daughter of Lord Hastings, was left a widow in 1846. Her sons were Francis, 9th Duke of Bedford, Arthur, and Odo, afterwards Lord Ampthill.

The "great marriage in Piedmont" was that of the Princess Clotilde, Victor Emmanuel's daughter, to Prince Bonaparte (son of Jerome), Napoleon III's cousin and military representative.

Jessie White (Madame Mario) was a great supporter of the Mazzinist refugees in England.

Mr. Cartwright, of Aynhoe, and his wife became very close friends of Robert Browning (*Life*, 228, 229).

Rome, 43 Bocca di Leone,
Feby. 10, 1859.

MY BELOVED HENRIETTA,

Your letter was three times welcome, though mine to Arabel on business had to intervene between it and my thanks. Dear, if I don't write as often to you as I think, it is that I calculate on your knowing of me whenever I throw a

stone towards England. This in my hand is your stone however. It seems to me that letters take an enormous time in going and coming from Rome, and I am ever so much further from you here than when in Florence. I have had a good winter up to this point, though since Christmas Day I have not been out—but little fire has been necessary in the house, our rooms being warmed by such sunshine as you know not of. . . .

As to Robert he is lost to me and himself. If once a fortnight we have an evening together, we call it a holiday, both of us; and in fact this has hindered us from having people here in the evening. I have no vocation for receiving alone, and if my husband is caught up out of the windows—what then? It pleases me that he should be amused just now (not but that he denies being amused very often); and I think it's good for him—in an occasional winter like this. I wouldn't spend every winter at Rome though. Rome is too much like a watering-place—like a Cheltenham—the only difference being that the society is of a more aristocratical order generally here, where the Smiths and Browns yield to the Russells and Bruces even among the English. The Prince of Wales has arrived. Lady William Russell hears that he's to "do his lessons," and not to "go to any balls"—a "quiet boy" he is said to be. Mrs. Bruce the wife of his "governor" and who lives with him of course, brought a letter to me and left cards, which I returned through Robert, but we have not met yet. I do hope the English may not make themselves absurd by carrying up addresses and the like, as really there is no good occasion for toadeating loyalty, and it isn't the way of this foreign world.

For my own part, never did I feel myself so little English as now—No—I won't talk of politics. But judge, all of you, what I must be feeling during the present state of things; and while the infamous Times backs the present ministry into the iniquity of holding the hand of Austria against France in the matter of Italy. If any open step were taken by England on this bad road, I should learn to speak a new language. But there is hope still. The Daily News, for instance, is more

generous than I expected; and the Post, Lord Palmerston's organ, speaks bravely and as I would have it. The people of England will never justify Lord Derby in the overt policy—surely it must be impossible. Meantime I am breathless with emotion, seeing the development which I always foresaw on the part of Napoleon's intentions. Always I have said it would come to this. Tell Arabel, I am thinking of setting up as seer in politics, I am right so often. I have hung upon Jessie White's hands, entreating and arguing with her.

"You think so still," said she. "You think so still?"

"I think so still," I have repeated—"and this man is the only man on this earth who will and can help Italy."

"Slow about it," has Robert ejaculated sometimes.

"Only wait, only wait," have I answered.

Now we Italians (such as Pen and I) are all trembling with expectation. The great marriage in Piedmont—Ah, well, it's hard upon you, Henrietta dearest, to have politics of this kind thrust on you, when I know how Surtees swears in his moustache quite the other way, of course.

So let me turn and think of you all instead. No, Henrietta, you are sure not to leave Bryngwyn till Storm goes—if my dearest Storm is to go—Is he,—will he really? Tell him I shall send him a photograph of Mr. Talfourd's picture, if it is at all successful, and he is one of the first of the portrait-artists here. He won't let any one see what is done, but seems confident of not missing the mark. Also I mean to send Storm the new edition of "Aurora Leigh" with the engraved portrait—only I am afraid that won't be in time for him to take it to Jamaica if he is determined to do so soon. Give my tender love to my dearest Storm, and tell him how, whenever I hear of his saying a word of me, it thrills through me.

You are not to set me down, any of you, as quite of such a tragic aspect as is given in Arabel's photograph. At that time I was not very well, nor joyous—now it is better, strange to say, although she is not with me dearest thing. . . .

We have had to lecture Peni this morning. He began to discourse in a street yesterday to Annunziata, and another person, in his oratorical Italian, before an engraving of

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING, 1859.

From a drawing by F. Talfourd.

Napoleon at the window—telling the whole story of how the people cried " Viva Verdi " in the Tuscan theatres, and how *Verdi* meant *Vittore Emmanuele re d'Italia*, and what the " Prefetto " wrote to the " sotto prefetto " and all the rest of it. Several people gathered round well pleased, and it was said, " come ragiona bene il bambino." We have begged him not to do such a thing again, lest one of the police should be by, and Pen would be heard of next in the Castle of S. Angelo. . . .

We dine at five o'clock now, as we did in Paris. Not that I like it, but that it is rather a matter of necessity when one sees so many people. Robert began by refusing all invitations to dinner—and he never dines out now—*except when he does*. I mean there is not unfrequently an exceptional occasion—now he dines somewhere out of friendship—now to meet somebody extraordinary—and now to eat something extraordinary—such as " roast porcupine," with the Russells at Mr. Cartwright's ; and he is engaged—observe, Henrietta, and avert the nose of your imagination—he is positively engaged to the delicate luxury of a whole dinner " dressed in garlic " in company with Lady William Russell and both her sons. Lady William Russell is a " femme forte " you see. For my part I shall muse on a separation when Robert returns—or rather I shall beg him not to return.

No, Henrietta, I am far indeed from giving up the spirits. As to Dr. Randolph, if you had read, as I have, the minute details—the full notes—of what is called his " recantation," you would call it evidence for the facts, instead of evidence against them. Indeed he admits the utility of these facts in irrefragably proving the immortality of the soul, and considers the development of them in these days of general scepticism on that point, a providential arrangement. Only he calls on people when they are once satisfied of the existence of a spirit world to turn away from the subject, because of this evil result and that. He is absurd, I think, in so far that every subject under the sun is capable of abuse. Of course I agree with many a wiser man than he is, in believing that this particular subject is capable of frightful abuse—which does not

mean (even according to his own showing) that it is not capable of high use. . . .

Your attached

BA.

104

A birthday letter—Apportionment of letters between the sisters—Give more details—Ugly clothes for riding—Heavy shoes—Pretty garments—Social events—Dinner with the Prince—Warning against republican sentiments—England and Italy—The spirits : Dr. Channing's spirit—Milner Gibson's disturbed dinner-table—Absurdities—Fourth edition of " Aurora Leigh," with Talfourd's portrait.

The corduroys and gaiters here denounced were in fact a necessity for little Altham when he was taken out hunting.

Mr. Hawthorne is the American novelist. For Mr. Cartwright, see Letter 103.

Italian politics were leading up to French intervention and the momentary fulfilment of Mrs. Browning's belief in Napoleon III as the disinterested saviour of Italy.

Sidbrook was where the Hedleys had settled on their return to England.

Rome, 43 Bocca di Leone,
March 4, 1859.

My beloved Henrietta—ever beloved—for, indeed, indeed (at least with me) there is no diminution of love. Yet you seem to think so, you ! If I don't write often to you, dear, you must understand that I know it to be just as you say—you are a good deal absorbed in your children—have not time for writing—also, Arabel wants letters (having no children, poor darling) and what I write to her you have the echo of, as I am well aware. Otherwise I should not be content with this slack correspondence with Somersetshire.

Dearest Henrietta, I dearly love you, pray for you, think of you. None of the old days go past without a throb of pain in love. There are things too dear to talk of sometimes—I remember always. May God bless you, and keep you, and yours. Such words I can say without writing them.

But I want (this is my dissatisfaction) more news *in detail*

of you. Your last letter was scantier of details than mine ever are—although you told me in it some interesting things. . . .

[Educational details follow, concluding with a reference to Pen and his reading of French, Italian and German.]

Oh Henrietta—he would look up to your Altham with deep feelings of admiration and respect, equipped for " riding twenty miles " ! Can it be possible ?

Still, forgive me, I do not see the necessity, moral or physical of corduroys and larger gaiters. My dearest Henrietta—quantities of men I know in the habit of riding out every day, both here and in Tuscany—yes real Englishmen too —but never corduroys nor leather gaiters ever meets my eyes or my knowledge. Why should you disguise and distort a young child's natural grace by such things ? No—it is quite contrary to my doxy. I avow to you—I even think that dressing a child in coarse heavy clothing is likely to act injuriously on his manners and gestures in after life.

Pen tugs at me in vain for very thick shoes—which he thinks manly—because he has seen great boys wear them. I won't let him wear a shoe except of the soft polished leather. The other extreme people may say ! But the consequence is, that Peni's feet have never had either chilblain or corn, and that he walks and runs, like Camilla, (under whom the wheat didn't bend) for quickness and lightness. For the rest if he lived in the country there would be the less need for " velvet " you know. Here he always is in sight of the world ! and (let me confess myself) I have added to my extravagance of buying him a new black velvet blouse, by buying him besides a green velvet blouse—in which he looks perfectly lovely,—the burnished curls hanging over it ! I assure you Pen is admired considerably on all sides. " Not a child like him in Rome," people say—and are not wrong. His " graceful manners " are particularly appreciated.

Robert lets him go to day-concerts,—and he was at two last week. . . .

Not that he is swallowed up of music by any manner of means. He is as much a mere child as ever, enchanted with the carnival bonbons—or with many more trifling things—

kissing dolls, for instance—in unquenchable spirits from morning till night—and " so witty," as Mr. Hawthorne's little girls say, " that he makes one die of laughing."

Now I am going to tell you some more of our news. You say you prefer your quiet evenings to ours,—that is, to Robert's —for I sit at home or go to bed rather! Ah you wicked Henrietta, who used to be the dissipated person of the family, is it you who " reason high " upon domestic—quiet and felicity? Certainly Robert has not practised much quiet since we came to Rome: but as Annunciata is called on to " let out " the band of nether vestment, I don't complain—not I.

Well—did you hear from my letter to Arabel that Colonel Bruce had called on us, and said to me that " it was desired for the Prince of Wales not to enter into mixed society at Rome, but to know the most eminent men here,"— and that he, Colonel Bruce, " *knew it would be gratifying to the Queen that the prince should make Mr. Browning's acquaintance.*" He added that " it was necessary to proceed with delicacy and deliberation "—therefore when Robert had returned Colonel Bruce's visit—by leaving a card—he took no other step of course: and as five or six weeks passed, one did not know what further would be done. We never mentioned the circumstance to any one in Rome in the meanwhile.

At last, arrived a royal invitation, a " command," to dine with the Prince last friday—which was rather unlucky,—for Robert was engaged to dinner that very day at Mr. Cartwright's to meet Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, the Neapolitan ambassador, and the Piedmontese ambassador the Marquis d'Azeglio—(quite a congress!) and I didn't at all like his giving up Azeglio, who is worth a hundred royalties—(always excepting the Emperor Napoleon's).

Robert went however where British loyalty called, and got away early enough to go over to Mr. Cartwright's later in the evening, and make Azeglio's acquaintance—(and *he* by the way, is coming to see *me!*)

Well, we had a little laughing before Robert went to the royal dinner. I advised him against certain casualties—such as saying—

" Though I don't go as far in politics as my wife, yet I call myself a republican."

And I desired him to instruct the budding royalty in Italian politics of the best kind and so forth. I did *not* envy him his honour—not in the least, Henrietta, observe ! !

After all, however, the affair went off excellently. The prince is a fair, gentle youth, with a frank open countenance. Colonel Bruce presented Robert, and they went out to dinner immediately. The prince did not talk much, but listened intelligently and asked several questions on Italian politics—to Robert's own great surprise and mine—(for he and I had only jested in supposing the subject possible) and he found himself talking quite naturally of the wrongs of Italy to an evidently sympathetic audience. Not that the prince committed his royal youthfulness in the least degree, but that he listened intently, and his suite did more than listen.

England has been acting vilely in this matter and lost her last *prestige* in Italy accordingly : but I have the satisfaction to believe that the influential English *here* are swerving slowly towards a more noble attitude—which they can well afford. Lady William Russell quite agreed with me the other morning, that a few battles would clear the air wonderfully—and she is a very clever woman who knows the mind of her House and party—Not that I put my trust in Russells any more than in princes—except, let me say, the Emperor Napoleon, among the latter !

My interest in Italian politics has set me eating my heart lately ; and verily the diet has been bitter. The anxiety which has tormented me sometimes has made me wish that I could shut my eyes from the newspapers and my ears from the news till all was over.

" The spirits " are a more calming and elevating subject—and very interesting things are passing here. Dr. Channing's spirit (or one giving himself for such) has come to me, and answered questions in a most startled way.

I asked him if he thought differently or the same of the Lord Jesus Christ. The answer was :—

" God was manifest in the flesh."

I asked him if, on first entering the spiritual world, he was chiefly struck by the beauty?

Answer—" No."

" By what then ? "

" By the thinness of the veil."

" What veil ? "

" *Between that life and this life.*"

" No beauty there then ? "

Answer. " Transcendent beauty."

" Why did it not strike you ? "

Answer. " *It was not the Beauty which first overwhelmed me : it was the sense of immortality.*"

' Did you see the face of God ? "

" *No, no, no, child.*"

When this spirit first announced himself, I should have told you, that I said :—

" If you are Channing say something to give us pleasure."

The reply was—" *Be of good cheer—your sins are forgiven you.*"

I hear from England, the subject is advancing with a large section of the public. Milner Gibson's dinner table is, in the middle of dinner, lifted up to an angle of forty five—he praying (or rather swearing) for leave to get his dinner in peace.

And Mr. Grattan (quite a man of the world) in his late book on America urges that the subject deserves investigation by the learned, on substantial grounds.

There are absurdities on the part of its friends, I must say, which as much militate against this, as do the obstinacies of its enemies. For instance, think of Mrs. Milner Gibson sending out cards for " spiritual séances," just as she would for *matinées dansantes !*

I have just finished correcting " Aurora " for the fourth edition—to which an engraving from the photograph is to be attached. A photograph from Mr. Talfourd's portrait of me (which has been greatly admired and considered very like by the Roman world) will be sent to you by an early opportunity. It is too flattering—much idealized, in fact—but there must be a good deal of likeness, or it would not strike so universally.

As a work of art, it is certainly most beautiful. Don't let me forget to say that the Prince of Wales told Robert very graciously that he had gone to see it—which he did really—and I was glad, for the artist's sake.

Now write to me dearest dear Henrietta, Arabel is devoured of the Bazaar. I shall be a little uneasy till I hear that she is well over it without being very ill. May God bless you, dear Surtees and all. Love from Robert and Pen. Is the house near Sidbrook ? and how is it called ?

Your ever attached unchanging

BA.

105

About to leave Rome—Family news desired—High hopes for Italian freedom—R. B.'s view—Napoleon III in excelsis—No danger in Italian travel—Cannot go to England—Funds ultimately secure—Austria the only fear—Peni and the Cause—Jessie Mario's attack on E. B. B.'s and R. B.'s political statement.

Events were marching in Northern Italy. Austria had declared war on April 29th and invaded Piedmont, the signal for Napoleon to intervene—and to intervene successfully. Within a few weeks two battles were to be fought and won —Magenta and Solferino.

43 Bocca di Leone, Rome
May 27, 1859.

MY EVER DEAREST HENRIETTA,

We are on the point, that is within three days, of leaving Rome—this is monday and we go on Thursday—but I can't go without telling you, dear, how I sympathized with you in your anxiety about dear Surtees, and your deep joy afterwards and as I trust it will continue.

Now *I* am anxious for two things—to have a better account of Arabel who certainly wants change of air, and sea air probably—and then to hear of Storm's arrival. I pray God I may have happy letters soon—for even the glorious work going on in Italy does not distract me from some anxious moods. If Arabel loves me ever so little she is by this time at the sea, which may do her much good.

Then I want to hear of you, dearest Henrietta, and that Surtees has become as strong as usual, and that you have made your removal, and are satisfied with the new house.

The carrying out of military movements in England may serve the good use of giving Surtees more employment—and I hope and trust this may be—though I confess to you nothing of the kind, in spite of all my love for you, can make me the smallest amends for the disgrace with which the English name has covered itself lately among thinkers of all nations. I will try not to talk of it. I know I shall only put myself wrong with Surtees and you. Also Italy is comforting me for England. Robert and I are of one mind on the subject, which is a comfort.

Louis Napoleon has acted—I was going to say—sublimely—and why should I not? The feeling towards him here is profound. Italy stretches her arms to him as to the very angel of the resurrection. Emancipation was utterly impossible without foreign help, and he brings it at all risks to himself and to France,—while France (and this generosity touches me to the heart) France responds and justifies him for counting on her, with a burst of enthusiasm from the centre to the shore. The people in Paris attempted to take the horses from his carriage and draw him to the station—a thing scarcely ever heard of in France—and were only prevented by his standing up and entreating them not to delay his journey.

Now we shall have a free Italy. And the Italians will fight nobly, since they have leaders and faith, and a unity of conviction from the north to the south. Things have ripened since 48 and 49—Tuscany, for instance, has conducted itself with a " superhuman virtue " say certain of our friends who witnessed the late movements there, and I am going back in joy to the tricolour, and a " government united to Piedmont." Oh, it seems to me like a beautiful dream,—too beautiful to be other than a dream! But if it were a dream, the cannons would wake me.

Meanwhile there is nothing you need fear for us. You know we are apt to flourish rather in revolutionary atmospheres. We travel by Siena to Florence—the rapid way, in which there

are four hours of railway—and as we take a vettura with four horses, and six up the hills, we shall do it in four days. We refused a close carriage because we wanted to take our own luggage which required another sort of vehicle. Last time we sent it by sea—which is too uncertain now. The steamers are so crowded with fugitives from Italy, that we hear of *sitting* room being the only thing possible between this and Marseilles, unless a berth or mattress on deck be engaged two or three weeks before hand. So we could not conveniently send Ferdinando and our luggage that way as we did in coming here. Then the country as far as Florence seems tranquil enough on *this* side of the peninsula,—and I dare say we shall not be confiscated by brigands, particularly as we travel in a large party, making up five men among us.

To go to England this year, my dearest Henrietta, is out of the question. We couldn't be away just now for several reasons,—and if we could, there might be a difficulty in returning.

Meanwhile we are not over anxious, or anxious at all (to speak for myself) about our funded supplies. Of course the Tuscan funds are down to the floor, but as we shan't offer to disturb our deposits, we are not likely to suffer when the crisis is over. It would have been more serious if the Grand Ducal party had indeed bombarded Florence and Casa Guidi (as it was gracious enough to intend) for in that case coupons might have perished out of the world perhaps, and we should have had to begin it again, with a very small scrip.

We shall stay in Florence as long as the sun lets us, and then go into the nearest shade—not to the Bagni di Lucca, this time.

The only danger of course is, from the possibility of an Austrian attack—which would take place if that bad enemy were allowed breathing time. But I trust in God and the cause—and in Louis Napoleon. If, as we hear, a French battalion under Prince Napoleon is to occupy Florence and assist the few Tuscan regiments spared from the frontier, we shall do excellently.

Peni goes back with the intention of hanging an Italian tricolour flag on one end of our terrace, and a French tricolour

on the other. He is very zealous, and hungers for the earliest news from Piedmont. Most gravely he said to Annunciata and me, as he was covering himself up in bed the other night—"If I were a great boy and hadn't a wife, certainly I would go and fight for dear Italy."

The idea of the wife, I think, came from Ferdinando who has been regretting lately that the consideration for his family should keep him back from the volunteer-service in which he fought during forty-eight. . . .

Here I get Arabel's letter. Ah that darling will be vexed about our not going to England, and yet surely she must have been prepared for it! We can't be out of Italy during this crisis for more reasons than one. I will write to her from Florence—only she must leave me a little time to recover from the stress of the journey. I will write to her, dear darling. I wish she were with us with all my heart. . . .

My poor headstrong friend Madame Mario is not to be quoted on any subject—not even against *me* to whom she has behaved ill. She wrote me quite an insulting letter intimating that Robert's and my printed statement (which she gave the whole credit of to me) was written as a care of our personal safety solely at Rome. So like me that was! And so likely too, to effect such an object!!! She is about as right in her estimate of Louis Napoleon—being governed absolutely in her soul by that man of a narrow-head and unscrupulous conscience Mazzini. The whole party has perished out of Italy. We have been forced to make a final statement in print which you will all see in the Athenæum.

Tuesday—the day after to-morrow we go—and here is the last fragment of paper left to me.

Peni's photograph has come out detestably—the consequence, in fact, of his shutting his eyes against the glare. I won't send one to Arabel because she has a better representation of him, and I don't like sending it to you. . . .

Also the photographs from Robert's two portraits are not ready. May God bless you. Keep well and happy and write to me. Dearest dear Henrietta I am ever your loving

Ba.

106

Dreams shattered by the Peace of Villafranca—England's part—Magnanimity of the Italians—Is made ill by these events—Move to Siena—Pen and Napoleon—Second thoughts on the situation—The future of Florence—Country life in Siena—Devotion of R. B. during her illness.

The story of the dream and the mountains of the moon is told at length in the *Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, vol. ii, p. 321. Napoleon drew back when Russia threatened to support the defeated Austrians and so provoke a European conflagration. Italy was not freed and united: Napoleon's acquisition of Nice and Savoy confirmed others in their doubt of his honesty. Mrs. Browning did not doubt him, but the failure of her hopes for Italy had a serious effect in breaking down her health, before the worse stroke of her sister's death in the following year.

Of R. B.'s devoted care during her illness, she writes to Sarianna Browning, "For more than a fortnight he gave up all his night's rest to me, and even now he teaches Pen." (*Letters*, ii, 320; cf. 337-8.)

How generously R. B. paid his debt to the genius of the old, impracticable Landor, is told in the Life of R. B., pp. 219, 224. Cf. *Letters*, ii, 343 and subsequent references.

Villa Albert, Siena, Toscana,
(*Summer.*) *Monday*, 1859.

My own dearest Henrietta,

I write to you to-day, because that naughty Arabel didn't send me her new address—also, I owe you a letter. I owe everybody letters; and am a little afraid that the silence made by one cause and another may have induced some wondering among you—not a line have I written since the peace.

I fell that day from the mountains of the moon where I had walked hand in hand with a beautiful Dream—now fled away. The grief, the despair overwhelmed us, none of you can imagine of.

I *never will forgive* England for her part in these things—*never*—in helping Prussia and confederated Germany, by a league of most inhuman selfishness, to prevent the perfecting of the greatest Deed given to men to do in these latter days.

So we have lost Venetia. There remains however much gain—and we begin to be hopeful about ultimate conclusions, on account chiefly of the stedfast mind and admirable feeling of the populations of central Italy. Nothing can have been finer than the bearing of all these peoples. On the day of the notification of the peace, the portraits and busts of the Emperor Napoleon disappeared throughout Florence. Florence where scarcely a man would have refused to die for him the day before! We were all blind incredulous, dizzy with grief. But the passion of the moment passed, and we returned to justice—and to the admission that after all the emperor's first duty was to France. Most magnanimous in their sense of gratitude have the Italians been. Probably, nay, certainly, the emperor felt himself constrained by the highest motives—But oh, to what?

Well—I can't write of it. I have not been at all well, I am sorry to say, and have lost my advantages of a Roman winter which was the cause to me of so many personal compliments. So wonderfully well people thought me looking. The great mental agitation coming on me when the ferocious state of the weather had rendered me peculiarly susceptible,—combined with some cold-catching, I fancy, brought about an attack on the chest of a very unpleasant character—so that I am only now getting over it.

As soon as I was able to move from Florence, we came here, where it is comparatively cool. We stayed for two days in Siena at the Hotel, and then settled ourselves at this beautiful villa, in the midst of the hills and vines.

Soon, I expect to be quite strong again. The cough is very much better, or even better still, and I can sleep at nights; and I am stronger in all ways. If this had happened in the winter, or in the north, it would have gone hard with me—and it hasn't gone very soft even here—only I speak of things of the past, and by the time you get this letter you must fancy me in my usual condition—looking as like Mr. Talfourd's portrait as possible—and loving you beyond every sort of probability, remember.

Of course you all think me mad upon politics: but you, from your point of view, can't judge of what I see and feel

from mine. Think of me, in my first anguish, making Peni put off his Napoleon medal from his blouse—poor Pen resisting, and insisting that his emperor had " not done a bad thing, *he* knew ! " Afterwards I grew just, and seemed to understand better. Yet Napoleon had done so much, risked so much—his dynasty, his life—that one was not prepared for his retreating before the risk of a general war. One was not prepared. It was an intimation from Russia that she could not support him beyond a certain line, which decided everything at last—but the whole onus and shame of failure rest upon England, Prussia, and Germany. There ! I will not talk of it any more.

Of course the whole of Italy is a volcano just now. We are quiet here (in Florence,) that is we keep quiet : but any attempt at imposing the Grand-ducal dynasty will be repulsed by the sword. That is determined. Not that France has ever had such a notion for a moment. Only the Duke and his party may. Mr. and Mrs. Story have a villa here,—and Mr. Landor has rooms in a little house not far off. I will tell you his history one of these days—not to-day.

Now we are beginning *our* country life, my darling Henrietta—not like yours, but pleasant. Such a reach of purple hills, crowned with such coronets of golden sky towards evening ! Such silences,—and such stretches of solitude. The country in Italy is really country.

Pen is very happy—taking drives in the oxen carts, between heaps of *pomi d'oro*—and we have brought books with us from Florence ; and we get newspapers—the Galignani, the Times, and the Italian journals, of course. Presently Robert means to hire a little carriage that we may go out day after day and explore the neighbourhood. We stay two months. . . .

Oh, I ought to try to give you an idea how good and devoted Robert has been to me through my illness—and it was wearing work at nights. I am very grateful to him, and may God enable me to prove it.

I wish I had a little scratch of a sketch of which I could fancy your new paradise. Scratch me one at the top of a letter. This you won't be able to read.

Where is Arabel ? At Minehead ? and where's Minehead ?

Tell her to write to me, that I may write to her—and do *you* write to me, dear dear Henrietta ; and tell me all the dear little things about everything yours.

Love to Surtees. Love to the darlings. May God bless and keep you all.

I want so to hear that Arabel has gained by the sea.

Yours always in tender love

BA.

107

Letters received—Arabel takes holiday—Own mode of taking such holiday—Visit from George and Arabel impossible—Life at the villa—Must winter away from Florence, though hardly in Sicily —Pen's music—Mr. Russell visits them—Political talk—The Storys and Landor.

Lord John Russell's nephew is Odo Russell, afterwards Lord Ampthill. He held an important diplomatic post in Italy from 1858 to 1870. Lord Derby was at this moment Prime Minister at home.

Villa Alberti, Siena, Toscana.
Sept. 13, 1859.

MY EVER DEAREST HENRIETTA,

I must answer your two dear little notes, one in Arabel's letter and one with Mrs. Martin's. If you knew what joy it is to me to get a sign of life from you, dear, and from Arabel, you would write oftener—only because *I* know how your time is swallowed up and digested by those children of yours, I don't expect a word more than I get.

As to Arabel, the best thing I have heard lately has been her going to Lynton with George. Sea air is necessary for her—she has been told so ; and she goes to the sea—for how long, was it ?—a month, or so. Now there will be a breath or two in addition, through dear George's aid and abetment. Don't you think, Henrietta, that Arabel is a very unfit person to live by herself ?

Now if it were I, I should have gone straight to the sea, (if ordered there) crept into a cave somewhere, and turned my back on the rest of the world, with unlimited supplies from Mudie on my right hand side. But that darling Arabel must

be pulled and pushed and held, and kept company with—or back she runs to London, which is just the worst place in the world for her. (I mean this piece of impertinence for her especial meditation, understand.) Of course the influence of sea air and water requires time—she should have spent the whole summer on the coast: but we must take what we can get; and I am grateful to George for the unhoped for supplement.

George too, not well! Pray keep me informed all of you about his headaches, which he ought not to have. I felt shy of pressing him to keep his promise in respect to Italy—partly through those headaches and the uncertain effects of political affairs, in consequence of which I knew he would consider it madness to bring Arabel here just now. That darling Arabel "wished she could come to me when I was ill"—but I would not have had her here when I was ill, to torment her, dear darling: but now, that wish of hers comes back and rankles in me. How I should like to have her here, and George!

Our villa is really enjoyable—great rooms, with beautiful views. Sunsets red as blood, seen every evening over deep purple hills, with intermediate tracts of green vineyards. And the silence, the repose. I drink them from this full "beaker of the warm south." The temperature has changed from heat to freshness. Last night for the first time, we had a counterpane over us, as well as a sheet; and I who for two months had not worn a *corset*, put mine on this morning, yes and a flannel petticoat for prudence sake.

We go out every day to drive—and little Pen has a pony, and a boy to preside—and you can't think how well and boldly the child gallops through these lanes, riding for two or three hours daily.

We can't stay at Florence this winter, my doctor having expressed his opinion that I must go to a warmer climate for the cold winter. We thought of Palermo—but there's a rough sea to pass, and a risk of being made revolutionary mince-meat of at the end. The probabilities being all in favor of hot work throughout the Neapolitan territories, besides the south of Italy. We know the Italians, and I should not fear at Rome:

but Sicily is a different matter; and I should feel nervous there in spite of "the English fleet" in the offing, as Robert suggests it. Then to pass a winter without civilization is not tempting to one always—so I think we shall probably have another Roman winter, which we shall all rather like than otherwise. Meanwhile my strength has come back very fairly, and every day seems to increase it.

Pen makes great progress in music—music for two hours, Henrietta! He is just now learning a sonata of Beethoven (the one in E flat) and will play it well. In fact he is in the habit of playing modern German music which is harder and requires much more execution—more mobility of hand. Everybody who hears him is struck by it. Mr. Russell, Lord John's nephew, the quasi-minister at Rome, called it "quite amazing"; and he knows something of music. He has just been here on a visit of two days to us. We had a letter from him from Florence—he calling himself "broken hearted" at not finding Robert at Casa Guidi, and asking if he might not come over for a few hours on his way back to Rome. So Robert offered a bed and rough fare, and the offer was accepted instantly. Mr. Russell has the merit of being very appreciative of Robert—besides being, on his own part, acute and liberal, (liberal as the English can be) and extremely refined and amiable in manners. He had been taking his mother to England,—where the government would let him stay only three days. I couldn't help flying at once at my guest like an exhausted blood-hound.

"Oh Mr. Russell! how ill you have all behaved!"

"Well, but *now*, we are really not doing much harm,—are we? You must remember how little we have it in our power to do."

I answered that I was not referring particularly to the members of the present government—(though I might have added, that when out of office they were as mischievous as any —and worse, because acting against their own principles): but to England generally.

He said it was "too true that England was perfectly without feeling for foreign nations." On which I was silent. We are

agreed. But the difference is that he admits it with a smooth accent and countenance, while I revolt against the fact, and call it intolerably hideous, a national sin crying out for judgment.

There now! I shall not teaze you any more about politics. Robert gave me a lecture about it the other day. Also, being in improved spirits for Italy, and finding the right and the truth coming out every where, I am more able to rule my tongue and be still.

Mr. and Mrs. Story are our neighbours about a mile off here, and Mr. Landor lives in a house nearer.—Otherwise the solitude is absolute—quite the country, in the most countrified sense. We take in two Italian papers, and Mr. Story lends us everyday the Galignani, and every other day a stray number of the Times: and books from Florence are sent from the library. Altogether I shall be sorry when the repose breaks up. Perhaps we may stay a week deep into October—that depends on the weather. . . .

Are you really, Henrietta, going to send Altham to school? Well—you can judge best, of course, it may be desirable for more reasons than one. Will the darling like it? or not? I know my little Mary won't, whoever does. It will be a loss to her—even though the Saturdays bring joy. Tell me how you manage it and how it seems to answer. . . . Peni's Latin is not begun yet—though we mean to make him a good Latin and Greek scholar, later if not sooner.

I envy your dancing; and we mean to have Pen taught by a famous man at Rome who is to teach the Storys' children this winter. . . .

And Arabel will be with you on her way back to London. Tell her to write and to speak of herself with detail—for I am anxious about her—dear precious thing.

Robert's and my true love to you all—meaning Henrietta, Surtees, and the babies.

May God bless you beloved Henrietta—prays your

BA.

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